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ABSTRACT

The employment outcomes and career progress of ethnic minority members who graduated from four United Kingdom universities in 1993 were compared to those of their white counterparts. A final matched sample of 272 graduates (half were members of ethnic minorities) was achieved by filtering an initial sample of 3,421 graduates. Additional data were collected through follow-up interviews with a sample of 25 ethnic minority respondents and 10 major graduate recruiters. Ethnic minority graduates took longer to secure their first job after graduation. By December 1995, a higher proportion of ethnic minority graduates were in "professional" jobs; however, average salaries for ethnic minorities were slightly lower than for whites. White graduates were consistently more likely to be employed. Two of five ethnic minority graduates reported experiencing some racial discrimination in their present job. Indians reported the highest level of job satisfaction, followed by whites. No evidence of direct discrimination against ethnic minorities by companies in their graduate recruitment and development was found; however, a number of areas in employment policies and practices were identified as likely to put ethnic minority graduates at a disadvantage. (Thirty-six tables/figures and 64 references are included. Appended are additional tables, details regarding the survey design/response, and the questionnaire.) (MN)

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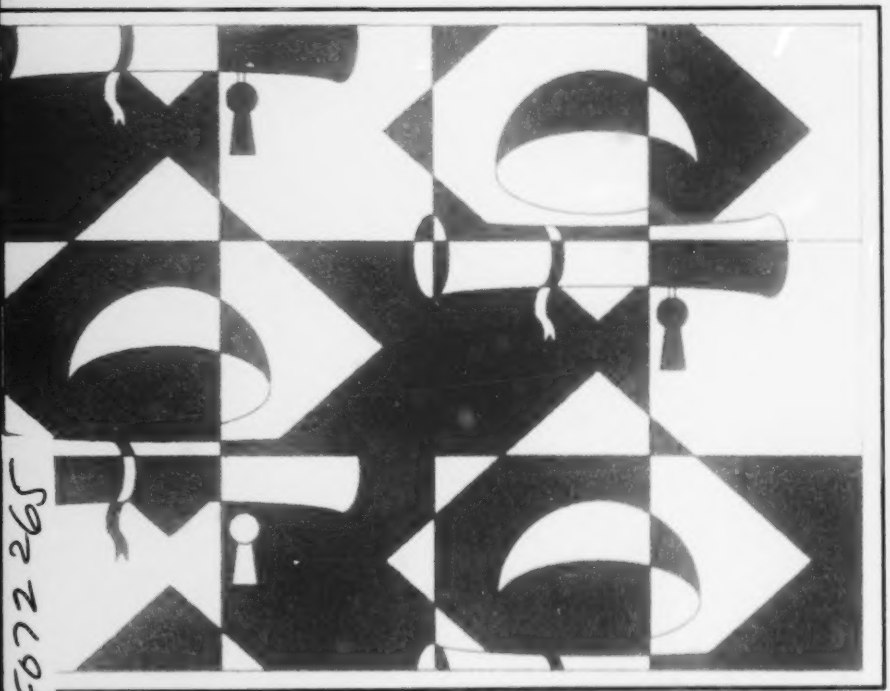

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The Institute for Employment Studies

The Institute for Employment Studies is an independent, international centre of research and consultancy in human resource issues. It has close working contacts with employers in the manufacturing, service and public sectors, government departments, agencies, professional and employee bodies, and foundations. Since it was established 25 years ago the Institute has been a focus of knowledge and practical experience in employment and training policy, the operation of labour markets and human resource planning and development. IES is a not-for-profit organisation which has a multidisciplinary staff of over 60. IES expertise is available to all organisations through research, consultancy, training and publications.

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Formerly titled the Institute of Manpower Studies (IMS), the Institute changed its name to the *Institute for Employment Studies* (IES) in Autumn 1994, this name better reflecting the full range of the Institute's activities and involvement.

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Executive Summary

This research was a small-scale exploratory study, commissioned by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), which investigated the employment outcomes and career progress of ethnic minority graduates from higher education. It drew comparisons, where appropriate, between various ethnic minority and white graduates in terms of their experiences in the labour market.

It comprised four main components: a review of available data and research literature; a small survey of 1993 graduates (a sample of 272 at four universities); follow-up interviews with a sample of 25 ethnic minority survey respondents; and interviews with ten major graduate recruiters. The research was undertaken between September 1995 and April 1996.

Ethnic minorities in higher education

Ethnic minorities are well represented overall in higher education, relative to their position in the UK population, but their distribution across the sector is uneven, especially between institutions.

Almost one in eight of all UK domiciled students at first degree level in 1994/95 were from ethnic minority groups (*ie* non-white), more than double their representation in the UK population (5.8 per cent — but for 18 to 21 year olds slightly higher, at 8.0 per cent). The largest ethnic minority group is Indian (27 per cent of all UK domiciled ethnic minority students at first degree level), the smallest is Bangladeshi (just three per cent).

Ethnic minorities are better represented in the new (*ie* post-1992) universities, and particularly at a select few, where they account for over 30 per cent of UK domiciled undergraduates. Business studies and computer science are more popular degree subject choices for most ethnic minority groups than whites, while education is generally less popular. There is also variation by gender and ethnic group, with women better represented among African-Caribbeans than Bangladeshis and Pakistanis. A higher proportion of mature students and students entering with non-traditional qualifications are found among some ethnic groups,

in particular black[1] students where access and vocational entry qualifications are more common than among Asians.

Participation of ethnic minorities in higher education has been increasing over time. This trend needs to be seen in the context of some of the broader changes in higher education, in particular its recent rapid expansion, broadening range of provision and delivery methods, and wider access.

Various factors have been identified in the research literature as explaining the differential participation of ethnic groups, and their distribution patterns, in higher education. These include: differences by ethnic group in prior academic achievement and education routes; impact of early career guidance and subject choice; image and style of some universities; as well as personal factors such as age, gender, home background, social class and family encouragement to progress to higher education.

The graduate interviews undertaken in this research confirmed these factors as key influences on early career development. In addition, location was identified as a decisive factor in choosing a particular university, as was its attitude to ethnic minorities.

Employment patterns

From the limited existing research evidence on employment outcomes of ethnic minority first degree graduates (mainly relating to the 1980s), a number of areas of disadvantage could be identified. These included: greater difficulties for ethnic minority than white graduates in getting appropriate jobs; less satisfaction with career progress; and experiences of some direct racial discrimination by employers. Other evidence, also mostly pre-1992, highlights higher unemployment levels among highly qualified ethnic minority people compared to white people, and differences between individual ethnic minority groups.

The survey of 1993 graduates was designed to provide a more up-to-date insight into employment outcomes and career progress of ethnic minority graduates, in particular to explore whether or not significant differences existed between ethnic groups. For various reasons the survey achieved a lower response rate (37 per cent) and smaller sample size (272 graduates split equally between white and ethnic minorities, but matched by age, gender, new/old university and subject) than expected at the outset, which limited the analysis possible. Also, the sample is based on just four universities, and while illustrative of the different kinds of ethnic minority graduates is not representative of the population. The survey findings, therefore, need to be treated with caution. However, they do highlight some important issues, in particular some marked differences between individual ethnic minority groups, which warrant further investigation through larger scale survey work.

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[1] Throughout the report the term 'black' will be used to indicate people in the combined African, African-Caribbean and black other groups, and 'Asian' for the combined Indian, Pakistani, Chinese and other Asian groups.

The main points arising from the survey are summarised below.

Degree outcomes. Similar proportions of ethnic minority and white graduates in the sample entered university with two 'A' levels, and there was little difference in their average 'A' level grades. However, black respondents had lower 'A' level qualifications and more had entered via the vocational route than other ethnic groups. Despite little difference in entry qualifications, ethnic minority graduates as a whole were more likely to have obtained a lower class of degree than whites. However, this again varied between individual ethnic groups, with black graduates in the sample doing less well at degree level than Indians or Chinese graduates. These differences in degree outcomes, as well as in educational routes into higher education, are factors which affect employment outcomes (see below) and would seem to require further investigation.

Entry to the labour market. Ethnic minority graduates took longer to secure their first job after graduation. However, when class of degree was controlled for in the analysis, the difference reduced. Ethnic minority graduates also had to make more job applications than whites.

First job. Ethnic minority graduates were more likely than whites to be in a better paid job initially, but this may partly reflect their greater concentration in the London area (particularly black graduates). Small differences emerged between sector of employment and occupational category of their first job.

Current job. By December 1995, some two and a half years after graduation, a higher proportion of ethnic minority than white graduates in the sample were in 'professional' jobs, but the initial earnings differential had disappeared. Average salaries for ethnic minorities were slightly lower than for whites, and particularly low for black graduates. Even less difference was seen in the employment sectors of current jobs than of initial jobs.

Career profiles. Over the two and a half year period, white graduates were consistently more likely to be employed and less likely to be unemployed, measured at six monthly points in time, than ethnic minority graduates, but the differences were small. Ethnic minority graduates also had more periods of unemployment, and their longest period was of greater average duration. In addition, while the initial gap between the two groups was small, it widened considerably in the second post-graduation year.

Job level and progress. More ethnic minorities than whites reported that a degree was an entry requirement or was helpful in getting the job. On the other hand, there was little difference in the extent to which the two groups felt their jobs required graduate level ability, and a higher proportion of ethnic minority graduates considered themselves to be slightly underemployed in their current job. Disappointment with the quality of jobs and employment opportunities was widespread (for both groups). There were little significant differences between graduates' experiences of applying and being considered for promotion, but whites were more likely to have been promoted than ethnic minorities. With regard to future promotion prospects, variations emerged between different ethnic groups, with expectations being highest among Indians and lowest among black respondents.

Unemployment. Ethnic minority graduates in the survey had experienced more periods of unemployment than white graduates in the period since graduation, and their longest period of unemployment was greater in duration on average. Graduates from ethnic minorities were considerably more likely than white graduates to link employment difficulties to lack of suitable educational qualifications and skills, while white graduates were more likely to blame labour market factors (*eg* competition, lack of vacancies).

Direct discrimination. Two out of five ethnic minority graduates had experienced some racial discrimination in their present job, but generally not of a serious kind. Black graduates were twice as likely than Asians to report having experienced some racial discrimination. Age discrimination was mentioned more frequently by ethnic minority than white graduates in the survey. Some of the interviewees also highlighted the existence of some racial discrimination at university, albeit in more subtle forms than earlier research had identified, which was felt to have had an influence on their degree performance and post-graduation career. Some female ethnic minority graduates interviewed felt 'doubly disadvantaged', because of racial and sexual discrimination.

Career satisfaction. White graduates in the survey were more satisfied with their careers to date than ethnic minority graduates. However, this varied between groups, with Indians being the most satisfied, then whites, and blacks being least satisfied.

Employer perspective

There was no evidence found (nor expected) of direct discrimination against ethnic minorities by companies in their graduate recruitment and development. However, a number of areas in employment policies and practices were identified as likely to put ethnic minority graduates at a disadvantage. Indications include:

- the very low representation of ethnic minorities in some companies, especially in higher level jobs
- the growth in graduates taking 'non-graduate' jobs, and the view that more ethnic minority graduates were likely to enter companies this way. These jobs tend make less use of graduate level skills and abilities and are associated with less structured training and development than graduate trainee/ entry programmes.
- the trend towards graduate recruiters targeting a select number of universities, often the more academic ones which traditionally have had low representation of ethnic minority students
- the use, in places, of pre-university education qualifications, type of university and class of degree in selection processes. This can disadvantage the 'non-traditional' graduate who is more likely to be found in the ethnic minority graduate population. The increasing use of competence-based criteria in graduate selection may help to reduce such disadvantage.
- the relatively unstructured nature of subsequent training and development in most companies, in comparison to more structured initial training. This means that subjective assessments by managers play more of a role in selecting individuals for continuing training and promotion, and can introduce discrimination.
- the varied support among senior managers of equal opportunities policies, and the differences in this respect between the public and the private sector
- the general absence of any formal monitoring evidence and a reliance on perceptions of managers in most companies, to assess the position of their ethnic minority graduates.

The interviews focused on large firms who were regular recruiters of graduates but many of the points raised could be applied generally to the range of large and small graduate recruiters.

Conclusions

The research has shown that differences currently exist in the labour market outcomes of graduates from different ethnic minority groups, though the evidence was not based on a sufficiently large sample of graduates to draw firm conclusions. This, and the extent to which other related factors (*eg* degree performance, educational/social backgrounds, recruiters' selection methods) also play a role, need further investigation through larger scale survey work, covering both initial destinations after graduation, and career progress. The research also highlighted other areas for further investigation, including the evaluation of specific initiatives to help ethnic minority students and graduates in their career planning.

1. Introduction

This is a report of research undertaken by the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) on ethnic minority students in higher education (HE) and their entry into and progress in the labour market. It was funded by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) and carried out between September 1995 and May 1996. Its main aim was to explore differences by ethnic origin in graduate employment outcomes.

1.1 Background

Overall, Britain's ethnic minorities accounted for an estimated 11.5 per cent of all UK domiciled students at higher education institutions (HEIs) in 1994/95, and 12.4 per cent of UK domiciled first year students on first degree study (HESA, 1995). This compares with an ethnic minority representation of 5.6 per cent in the total UK population. Admissions of ethnic minority (UK domiciled) students to full-time first degree courses have increased from just over ten per cent in 1992 to an estimated 13 per cent for 1995 entry (representing an intake in excess of 30,000 students) (UCAS, 1994 and 1996). These aggregate figures, however, mask wide variations between individual ethnic groups, and by subject of study, and between individual institutions.

While participation of ethnic minorities in higher education has been increasing overall, little is known about outcomes. Ethnic minorities generally continue to experience disadvantage in the labour market compared to white people, though its extent is reducing over time (Jones, 1993). While it is apparent that people from particular ethnic groups are increasingly entering managerial/professional occupations, the available evidence on the employment of ethnic minority graduates, and the extent to which they experience disadvantage on entry to the labour market, is sparse. Furthermore, higher education and the graduate market have changed considerably over the last decade, both in terms of an increased supply of graduates and greater diversity within the student population, and a broadening of demand in terms of types of employers and jobs (Court, Jagger, Connor, 1995). These contextual changes are likely to have affected graduates from different ethnic groups in different ways.

1.2 Research aims and objectives

The research study was undertaken to take stock of the available evidence on ethnic minorities in higher education and their labour market outcomes, assess its relevance, and identify where gaps lie. It was a small scale exploratory study which aimed to explore differences by ethnic origin in:

- trends in participation in higher education and factors of influence
- graduate employment patterns, in particular their entry to the labour market and subsequent careers
- attitudes and expectations of graduates about jobs and careers, and issues relating to their career development
- graduate recruitment policies and practices of employers and their attitudes to graduate recruits.

In addition, it assessed the feasibility of undertaking a larger scale study to measure the extent and nature of labour market disadvantage experienced by ethnic minority graduates.

1.3 Methodology

The research comprised four main elements:

1.3.1 Desk research

A review was carried out of previous research and analysis of relevant data on the participation of ethnic minorities in UK higher education and their employment outcomes. This sought to analyse the existing evidence and identify the key issues for investigation in the graduate survey and interviews.

1.3.2 Survey of graduates

A small follow-up survey of graduates was conducted in order to obtain more up-to-date information about employment outcomes and career progress of graduates from different ethnic groups.

The sample was based on the 1993 home first degree output from four universities, two established as universities pre-1992 and two post-1992 (*ie* former polytechnics). A large random sample of 3,421 graduates from these four universities were sent questionnaires in November/December 1995, some two and a half years after completing their first degree studies. A total of 1,177 useable questionnaires were returned by the end of January 1996, giving a response rate of 37 per cent. (A further 298 questionnaires were received after the survey had been closed, giving a total response rate of 46 per cent).

The achieved sample of 1,177 graduates contained 11 per cent from ethnic minorities (136 respondents). These were matched with a sub-sample of white respondents by type of institution, degree subject, age and gender. Questionnaires from this matched sample of 272 graduates were then analysed. (Full details of the survey methodology and response rate are given in Appendix 2, and a copy of the questionnaire in Appendix 3.)

Both the overall response rate and the number of ethnic minority graduates in the achieved sample response were lower than expected at the outset, and they affect the usefulness of the survey findings. The low response rate was mainly due to the addresses given by the universities being less accurate than expected. Other factors were the short timescale of the survey and the need to enlist the assistance of the universities in mailing questionnaires (for confidentiality reasons) which meant that only one reminder, rather than two as originally planned, could be sent.

The lower than anticipated proportion of ethnic minority graduates in the achieved sample arose mainly from the difficulties in selecting a suitable sample of universities. There were conflicts in meeting the requirements that the sample should illustrate the institutional diversity within the HE sector *and* provide high proportions of ethnic minority graduates. The representation of ethnic minorities (UK domiciled student population only) varies markedly between institutions, from an estimated five per cent or less at some, to over 30 per cent at others, and the pre-1992 universities tend to be at the lower end of the range. However, ethnic minority data on the student population have been collected nationally only since 1994/95, and are not published at an institutional level. Reliance, therefore, had to be put on estimates given by the universities rather than actual data from student registrations. In the event, it seems that an over-estimation was made by some of the universities of the proportion of ethnic minority graduates in 1993 (especially relating to UK domiciled graduates). Bias in the response was explored but this does not seem to have been a significant factor. For further discussion about the survey response, see Appendix 2.

Because of the small sample size and the low response rate, the analysis undertaken on the survey results has been more limited than initially planned. Although some of the findings need to be treated with caution, they do highlight interesting trends and identify differences between ethnic groups which, taken with evidence from other parts of the research, provide insights into the various labour market experiences of graduates from different ethnic backgrounds.

1.3.3 Interviews with graduates

Twenty five face-to-face interviews were undertaken with graduates to explore attitudes and experiences, in particular, the influences on their career development, their career progress and satisfaction. The graduates were selected from the survey respondents to cover a range of people from different ethnic minority groups and with different career profiles. The interviews were useful in illustrating different experiences of ethnic minority graduates, and could explore some issues in greater depth than in the questionnaire survey.

1.3.4 Interviews with employers

Employers' perspectives were sought via interviews with a small sample of ten. They were mostly regular graduate recruiters and large organisations, drawn from a variety of sectors: manufacturing, legal and business services, financial services, retail, transport, public services and the voluntary sector. The respondent was, in the first instance, the graduate recruitment manager/officer, and subsequently, the equal opportunity manager/officer.

In addition, views were obtained from university careers advisers and members of the joint AGCAS/AGR group on equal opportunities (comprising employers and university careers advisers) and from a number of professional bodies.

1.4 Structure of the report

The report is divided into six chapters:

Chapter 2 summarises the relevant earlier research and describes the current pattern of participation of ethnic minorities in higher education. It draws out the main issues from the existing research evidence and sets the scene for subsequent chapters.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 present the findings from the graduate survey and interviews. Chapter 3 presents survey findings on the graduates' employment and careers to date, drawing out key differences between ethnic minority and white graduates, and between individual ethnic minority groups.

Chapters 4 and 5 cover in more detail the experiences of graduates from different ethnic groups and the influences on their progress into higher education and subsequent employment, drawing on both the survey and interview data.

Chapter 6 discusses the views from employers, and their recruitment practices and policies relating to ethnic minority graduates.

Chapter 7 summarises the main research findings and draws conclusions.

Appendices include further details about the research methodology, including some supplementary data, survey response and a copy of the survey questionnaire.

2. Ethnic Minorities and Higher Education

This chapter summarises the existing evidence on the participation of ethnic minorities in higher education, their entry into the labour market and their subsequent career progress. The aim has not been to produce an exhaustive analysis, but to highlight the relevant literature and data and identify key issues for further investigation in the graduate survey and interviews, and employer interviews. These findings are presented in subsequent chapters. This chapter is divided into four sections:

1. a brief overview of the distribution of ethnic minorities in the UK population, and general trends which have a bearing on education and employment patterns
2. a review of the evidence on participation of ethnic minorities in higher education, and the main factors influencing recent supply trends
3. a review of the evidence on outcomes — graduation, the transition into jobs and the position of ethnic minority graduates in the labour market
4. a summary of the key issues identified in the data and research literature.

2.1 Population overview

The total ethnic population in the UK is about 3.3 million, representing 5.8 per cent of the total population (LFS, Dec. 1995-Feb. 1996). It has been gradually increasing in size, from just under five per cent of the population in 1988/90. Between 1981 and 1990, ethnic minorities in the UK increased numerically by 18 per cent (Jones, 1993).

The largest individual ethnic group are people of Indian ethnic origin, making up 25 per cent of the total ethnic minority population; next largest are Pakistanis, 16 per cent, and the African-Caribbean population, 15 per cent; while the smallest groups are Bangladeshi, six per cent, and Chinese, four per cent. The balance between the individual ethnic groups is changing over time: African-Caribbeans are in decline, while the Bangladeshi population is increasing (see Table A1.1, in Appendix 1 for trend data).

The age profile of the ethnic minority population is younger than for whites. In 1995, a higher proportion of the ethnic minority population was aged 16 to 24 years, 15 per cent, compared to 11 per cent of the white population. Those aged under 16 years formed 31 per cent of all ethnic minorities, compared with 20 per cent of all white people. The Pakistani and Bangladeshi populations have the youngest age profiles of any ethnic group, while the African-Caribbean population's age profile is similar to that of the white population. These age differences are of significance to the current and future participation of ethnic minorities in higher education, since the main entry cohort to first degree full-time study is 18 to 20 year olds (Connor *et al.*, 1996).

The gender balance within the ethnic minority population as a whole is moving closer to that of the white population, but within Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups, males continue considerably to outnumber females.

An increasing number of people of ethnic minority origin have been born in the UK: in 1988/90, this applied to 87 per cent of ethnic minority children (under-16 year olds). This means that an increasing number of ethnic minority university students will have been educated and have made career decisions while at secondary school in the UK.

Another feature of the ethnic minority population is that it is very urban and regionally concentrated in the South East, particularly Greater London. Individual ethnic groups have slightly different geographical distributions. For example, over half the African-Caribbean population is in London compared to 37 per cent of Indians and 19 per cent of Pakistanis. Certain towns have high concentrations of ethnic residents (*eg* Leicester, Birmingham), and particular London Boroughs (*eg* Tower Hamlets). Some research has pointed to a link between high proportions of ethnic minorities and the presence of large educational establishments (EOC, 1994). It suggests that this is because some ethnic minorities, notably African, Chinese and other Asians, came to Britain to study.

The geographical distribution of ethnic minorities is likely to be of increasing significance in the pattern of participation of ethnic groups at an institutional level. Local or regional areas are being increasingly targeted by universities as student catchment areas and employment markets for their graduates (Connor *et al.*, 1996), and there is an increased propensity for students to study in their home region (Court, Connor and Jagger, 1994).

2.2 Participation in higher education

2.2.1 Education routes

There is little very recent research evidence on educational attainment of different ethnic groups, but research done in the

1980s shows that a higher proportion of ethnic minority than white people continue in education beyond 16 years, and more 16 to 19 year olds are in full-time education (see for example the *Youth Cohort Study* and its analysis by Drew, Grey and Sime, 1991, and the Jones 1993 analysis of the Labour Force Survey). Overall, African-Asians, Chinese and Africans were more likely to be in full-time education at age 16 to 19, but there were also clear differences by gender between ethnic groups (see Appendix Table A.1.2). Interestingly, white 16 to 19 year old men were the least likely to be in full-time education of all groups in 1988/90, while African-Asian men were the most likely. More African-Caribbean female than male teenagers were in full-time education, while the reverse was true for Pakistanis.

There are also differential rates of participation in 'A' level courses by both ethnic group and gender. While 25 per cent of male Asian students in their first year of post-compulsory education were taking two or more 'A' levels (the traditional entry qualification for higher education), this contrasts with 17 per cent of male white students but only eight per cent of African-Caribbean female students. The latter were more likely to be taking 'O' levels than their male counterparts.

There is some evidence to suggest that young people from ethnic minorities, especially African-Caribbeans, are more likely to use the further education sector for both academic and vocational purposes, while white young people use it mainly for vocational qualifications (Eggleston *et al.*, 1986). For the age group 16 to 19, ethnic minorities were less likely to be at school than white students, but more likely to be at further education college: 88 per cent of white 'A' level students (in 1985 to 1986) were studying at school, compared to 73 per cent of African-Caribbeans and 80 per cent of Asians (Drew, Grey, Sime, 1991).

More recent evidence from the Labour Force Survey in 1995 broadly confirms this pattern, with higher proportions of ethnic minority 16 to 19 year olds in full-time education than white young people, and in further education or other full-time education rather than at school.

These differences are important for HE participation as well as for gaining subsequent employment. As will be seen later in this chapter, while entry to university via further education is increasing, it remains an insignificant route at many universities. Also, many graduate recruiters rely on traditional qualifications and educational routes (*ie* emphasis on school and 'A' level points) in their shortlisting criteria, which can disadvantage some ethnic minority graduates (Strebler and Pike, 1993).

In the past, acceptance rates have been shown to be lower for students applying to a university or polytechnic via further and higher education than while at school (UCCA, 1991 and Taylor, 1992). However, in the last few years there has been a considerable expansion of the further education sector and changes in the scope of its provision. There has been more open access and more flexible admission policies in many universities, in particular among former polytechnics (post-1992 or 'new' universities). These may have altered some of the historical patterns outlined above.

2.2.2 Educational experiences

A number of research studies have been undertaken which have sought to explain some of these differences in educational routes and attainment levels for different groups of students, including differences between ethnic groups.

Career choice, at 13 to 14 for GCSEs and later for 'A' levels and university, can present a series of hurdles for students en route to higher education. Tomlinson (1987) in a study of 14 year olds at multi-ethnic schools showed how teachers have a strong influence in channelling students into certain examination courses (and therefore career paths). While past attainment was a major factor, she found that stereotypical views or low expectations of certain ethnic groups existed among teachers and careers advisers. In other research (Hyder, 1993 and Troyna 1991), the high incidence of Asians entering CSE rather than 'O' level examinations was found to relate to early streaming at the point of transfer from primary to secondary schools, where decisions were based on teachers' own perceptions of ability rather than the primary school's assessment of the individuals.

Other research on factors determining progress to higher education (see for example Singh, 1991; Drew, Gray and Sime, 1991) have highlighted:

- 'internal' factors, *eg* valuing education in communities/ cultures, family influence, personal motivation, ability and perceived usefulness for economic success, and
- 'external' factors, *eg* availability of opportunities, ease of entry, and impediments (such as racial discrimination).

Some of these are likely to have more significance for particular ethnic groups. Unemployment is also thought to be a significant factor, but the evidence on the effect of high unemployment as a push or pull factor is inconclusive.

Type of school has been shown in several research studies to be an explanatory variable for differential entry rates to higher education for ethnic groups, although it appears to be less important than prior academic performance (see Modood's analysis below). Access to schools with an established academic reputation is generally considered helpful in obtaining a university education, as well as giving the encouragement to take higher qualifications and the confidence to apply for a university place. However, Blair (1994) in a general discussion about some of the current changes affecting primary and secondary schools, in particular the outcomes of the new 'market system' and devolvement of decision making to schools, raises concerns that they may introduce some indirect discriminatory practices (*eg* getting places at schools where parents or grandparents went) and limit access for some people from lower socio-economic and ethnic groups.

Wrench (1991) studied the influence of the careers service on ethnic minorities and found that while careers officers considered themselves to be 'colour blind', they often held popular stereotypes which were reflected in their assessment of abilities and personalities. For example, Wrench cites lower assessment by careers advisers of numerical and verbal ability of Asian girls and African-Caribbean boys, though actual attainment levels were the same as for others; and higher perceived aspirations of Asian boys and African-Caribbean girls. Research by Bird, Yee and Mylerl (1992) also provides evidence of careers advisers holding stereotypical views of particular ethnic groups' likelihood of success in higher education. This had the effect of putting off students from applying to higher education, or not providing them with sufficient information to make choices. Other research (*eg* Tanna, 1990) also discusses the role which racial stereotypes can have on influencing educational experiences, as well as criticising the reliance in many studies of measures of achievement. She argues that the latter is an oversimplification which ignores the process of attainment, especially length of time to gain qualifications.

Other influences on early career decisions are employers and universities themselves. Liaison between schools, employers and universities can help students make informed choices. Some of the schools liaison of the more traditional universities (established pre-1992) tends to avoid inner city schools with low/no sixth forms (Bird, Yee and Myler, 1992), though some new initiatives (*eg* compact schemes, or community partnerships where universities make access agreements with individual schools or colleges) have been specifically targeted on schools where traditionally few applications have been received. As yet, their impact has not been measured.

2.2.3 Applications to higher education

The main source of data on applications to higher education is the University Central Admissions System (UCAS). Since 1993, this has processed applications to all UK universities and provides information about the ethnic origin of applicants. Prior to 1993, the admissions system was run by two bodies, one for the former polytechnics (PCAS) and one for the universities at that time (UCCA). Ethnic origin was first asked by PCAS in 1989 and UCCA in 1990. Several researchers have analysed these earlier sets of data and have highlighted differences in entry

rates between ethnic groups. These are discussed below, along with an analysis of the more recent UCAS data.

Although the UCAS data (and the earlier PCAS and UCCA data) are considered to be comprehensive and reliable, they relate only to entry to full-time study and to those people who have formally entered the applications process. The increasing amount of part-time provision at some universities in recent years is not covered by the central admissions systems, and little is known about trends in application rates in this area (although recently available data on part-time students from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) do show the current position of ethnic groups, see section 2.2.5 below). Also, small, but increasing, numbers apply directly to universities near the start of the academic year. As a consequence, the central admissions data tend to underestimate the total demand for higher education study. Furthermore, people who are put off from applying for various reasons are not captured in the data. It is not possible, therefore, to explore if any ethnic group is disproportionately discouraged from applying through the formal process. The ethnicity question on UCAS application forms is voluntary but the rate of refusal is very small, at around three to four per cent.

Applications data

There are several points of note in the applications data:

- Differences were apparent up to 1992 between the sectors covered by PCAS and UCCA, with the former polytechnics and colleges having a much higher proportion of their applicants coming from the ethnic minorities than the universities at that time. In 1990, PCAS received 13.0 per cent of total applications from ethnic minority students compared with 8.7 per cent by UCCA.
- Between 1990 and 1992 a shift in the balance of applications could be detected: UCCA applications from ethnic minorities increased to 11.25 per cent of the total, while the corresponding PCAS figure stayed fairly static (13.4 per cent). This difference between the two sectors is likely to have diminished within the new unified system but may still exist. It is not possible to investigate trends at an institutional level in the data made available by UCAS.
- Application rates vary according to individual ethnic group (Table 2.1). In aggregate, ethnic minorities had high rates of applications in 1992 to universities and polytechnics, when compared to their representation in the 15 to 24 age group in the population, and appear to have been better represented compared to whites. Chinese and African groups were particularly well represented in applications compared to their position in the population, while Bangladeshis were under-represented. Sizeable differences can be seen between the university and polytechnic sectors: in particular over

Table 2.1: Applications of home applicants to polytechnics/colleges and universities, by ethnic origin, 1992

	Polytechnics/Colleges		Universities		% of 15-24 age group*
	No. applicants	%	No. applicants	%	
White	226,037	86.6	205,403	85.0	92.8
Ethnic minority (total)	34,997	13.4	26,031	11.25	7.2
African-Caribbean	4,045	1.5	1,958	0.8	1.22
African	5,087	1.9	2,941	1.2	0.57
Black-other	1,514	0.6	922	0.4	0.56
Indian	9,508	3.6	7,244	3.0	2.13
Pakistani	4,996	1.9	3,922	1.6	1.35
Bangladeshi	1,031	0.4	813	0.3	0.49
Chinese	2,076	0.8	1,934	0.8	0.42
Other Asian	3,332	1.3	3,258	1.3	0.47
Other	3,408	1.3	3,059	1.3	–

* 1991 Census

Source: Modood and Shiner, 1994

twice as many African-Caribbean students applied to polytechnics and colleges as applied to universities.

- Since 1993 (in the new unified UCAS system) applications from ethnic minorities have continued to increase. In 1994, 13.2 per cent of total applicants to university full-time degree courses were from ethnic minorities, and the latest provisional estimate for 1996 entry is 14.0 per cent.

Differences by subject, gender and ethnic group

There are interesting differences in applications by gender within ethnic group. While women now slightly outnumber men in UCAS applications overall (51 to 49 per cent in 1994), they represent 62 per cent of all applicants from African-Caribbean and black-other groups[1], but only 40 per cent of Bangladeshi and Pakistani applicants. Other groups fall in between these extremes.

There are concentrations of ethnic minorities among applicants to courses in certain subjects, in particular to medicine and dentistry where a third of applicants for entry in 1994 where from ethnic minorities. Business and administration and social studies also attracted higher than average proportions of applicants from ethnic minorities. By contrast, education attracted only five per cent of its applicants from ethnic minorities.

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[1] 'Black-other' are people classified as of black ethnic origin but not African-Caribbean or African (see Table 2.2).

According to the UCAS data, ethnic minorities are less likely than white people to apply to university with two or more 'A' level passes, and more likely to have vocational qualifications or apply via access courses. African-Caribbeans, in particular, are more likely to apply via access courses: in 1994 one in four of African-Caribbean applicants had access qualifications compared with only six per cent of white applicants.

These differences in choice of subject and entry qualifications are not new. Several researchers in the past have highlighted the low number of applications from ethnic minorities for certain courses, notably teaching, which requires one of the lowest entry points (as measured by 'A' level grades) and the high number of applicants from ethnic minorities to competitive courses such as law and medicine (Modood and Shiner, 1994; Taylor, 1992). In Modood's in-depth analysis of 1992 UCCA and PCAS applications and admissions data, he showed that all the ethnic groups had a smaller proportion of applicants with two or more 'A' level passes, and that the lowest was found among the black groups. This situation arose for both university and polytechnic applications. He also showed that the mean 'A' level scores for white, Chinese, other Asian and Indian applicants to universities in 1992 were similar, but higher than for black applicants, especially African-Caribbeans. At polytechnics, mean 'A' level scores were lower overall than at the universities (pre-1992 ones), but the situation regarding differences between ethnic groups was similar to that for universities.

Taylor (1992) showed that a greater proportion of ethnic minority applicants are likely to have taken 'A' level re-sits in order to gain minimum entry qualifications. In 1991, 15 per cent of black, Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi applicants took two or more re-sits compared with five per cent of white applicants. He also showed that far fewer applications from ethnic minorities came from the state school sector, and more came from further education colleges. This is in line with the research by Eggleston *et al.*, (1986) and Drew, Gray and Sime (1991) (see section 2.2.1).

Institutional choice

As highlighted already, ethnic minority students are not represented evenly across institutions (though data at institutional level are not available to show the full extent of institutional variation, nor its trends). Students' choice of university is likely to be affected by a number of factors, *eg* knowledge of institution, location, reputation, image portrayed and personal recommendations of teachers, family and friends. An analysis of university prospectuses by Jewson *et al.* (1991) found that the image portrayed was mainly that universities were 'white' institutions. Equal opportunities policies in higher education were not well advanced pre-1992 with the universities at that time lagging behind the polytechnics (see for example Williams *et al.*, 1989).

This may explain why ethnic minorities tend to apply to universities which they know have a relatively high proportion of ethnic minority students. Modood (1993) obtained data for individual universities and showed the extent to which ethnic minorities were concentrated in a few less prestigious institutions, mostly polytechnics in London and the Midlands. He suggested that this arose from students choosing to apply to institutions close to home or because of attributes of these institutions, rather than students anticipating rejection from universities with higher reputations. There has been a tendency for ethnic minority students to apply to a limited number of universities close to their home area (though the more recent trend is for all students to stay closer to home, mainly for financial reasons).

Research for the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) on ethnic minorities in teacher training, raised a number of factors discouraging successful applicants. These included the unwillingness to leave home areas, which means that universities with comparatively small local catchment areas may have difficulties attracting more ethnic minority students. Factors also identified were perceptions of few black teachers in the profession and few black students on teacher training.

2.2.4 Admissions

Many of the general patterns and differences between ethnic groups in applications data can be seen in the admissions data, and so are not worth repeating (also, there are now more comprehensive data available on first year students from HESA, as discussed later in section 2.2.5). As mentioned earlier, ethnic minorities are well represented in admissions to higher education in comparison to their position in the population for the 15 to 24 age group, but this varies considerably by ethnic group and by gender (see Table 2.2).

- Africans, other Asians, Asian Chinese and Indians are particularly well represented (*nb* these findings are almost identical to Modood's earlier findings).
- Bangladeshis, especially Bangladeshi women, are clearly under-represented.
- Women are better represented than men among African-Caribbean, other black, and Chinese groups.

Admissions to full-time degree courses from ethnic minority groups has grown at only a slightly faster rate than all admissions in the last five years. Between 1990 and 1993, the ethnic minority share of admissions to degree courses remained relatively static, at around 14 per cent in the former polytechnics and colleges and eight to nine per cent in the universities. The combined figure for 1994 for both groups (from UCAS) was 11.4 per cent, up from 10.6 per cent in 1992. The provisional figure for 1995 is somewhat higher at 13.0 per cent. This growth reflects the shift

Table 2.2: Home admissions to degree courses by ethnic origin, 1994

	UCAS 1994 Entry			Effective Participation Rate		
	Total	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**	**Male**	**Female**
White	88.6	88.0	89.1	5.9	5.7	6.2
African-Caribbean	1.0	0.7	1.2	7.0	5.3	8.7
African	1.4	1.5	1.2	20.9	23.6	18.3
Black other	0.4	0.3	0.5	4.6	3.4	5.7
Total black	2.7	2.6	2.9	9.5	8.9	10.0
Asian Indian	3.4	3.6	3.2	10.6	10.9	10.4
Asian Pakistani	1.6	2.0	1.3	7.5	8.4	6.5
Asian Bangladeshi	0.4	0.6	0.3	5.0	5.7	4.1
Asian Chinese	0.8	0.8	0.8	13.1	12.6	13.5
Asian Other	1.2	1.4	1.1	20.5	22.2	18.6
Total Asian	7.5	8.3	6.7	10.0	10.6	9.4
Total black & Asian	10.2	10.8	9.5	9.9	10.1	9.6
Other	1.3	1.2	1.3	11.8	10.9	12.6
Total	*100.0*	*100.0*	*100.0*	6.2	6.0	6.5

Source: IES, UCAS Annual Report 1993-1994 Entry, Table G2.1, and Census 1991, Ethnic Group and Country of Origin Report, Table 6

in admissions at many universities towards a broader based intake in terms of educational routes.

Admission bias?

A key question worth asking, however, is: is there any evidence of differential success rates according to ethnicity? And is there evidence of selection bias in addition to the bias highlighted already in applicants' choice of subject and institution?

Evidence made public by UCCA in the early 1990s showed that there were different rates of admission to universities for different ethnic groups. This led to debate concerning its causes, in particular possible discrimination in selection processes especially at 'old' universities. Taylor (1992) showed that whereas overall in the polytechnic sector, 13 per cent of applications and 14.5 per cent of acceptances in 1990 came from ethnic minority students, in the university sector the reverse was true, 8.7 per cent of applications came from ethnic minorities, but only 6.4 per cent of admissions. Differences between ethnic groups could also be clearly seen: 53.5 per cent of white applicants to universities at that time were accepted, compared to 26.7 per cent of black applicants, with Asians and others coming in between these two figures. At polytechnics, it was the reverse picture: whites had the lowest acceptance rates and there was less variation between ethnic groups. Modood and Shiner (1994) show the picture to be improving by 1992 but still half of all white applicants were admitted to universities, compared to an average of 38 per cent for ethnic minorities.

The UCAS applications/admissions figures for 1994 show there still is a disparity between ethnic groups, with 70 per cent of white applicants admitted, compared to an average of 63 per cent of ethnic minority applicants (*nb* admission figures are not directly comparable in new and old data systems). It is also worth noting that for most ethnic groups, women were less likely to obtain places in higher education than men.

There are a number of reasons which explain these overall differences. Some have already been discussed above in relation to choice of institution, educational background, location and educational attainment. A more detailed analysis is provided by Modood and others. The main conclusions from his research are that:

- **prior academic performance** is an important part of the explanation but does not explain all the inter-group differences
- **age, gender, social class, type of school attended and whether or not the institution was in the home region** are additional explanations, but
- some differences remain partially unexplained, in particular the differences for some ethnic groups between universities and polytechnics. This has led to the conclusion that **some direct discrimination** in admission and selection processes may be taking place, but in a complex way, affecting some, or parts of, ethnic groups.

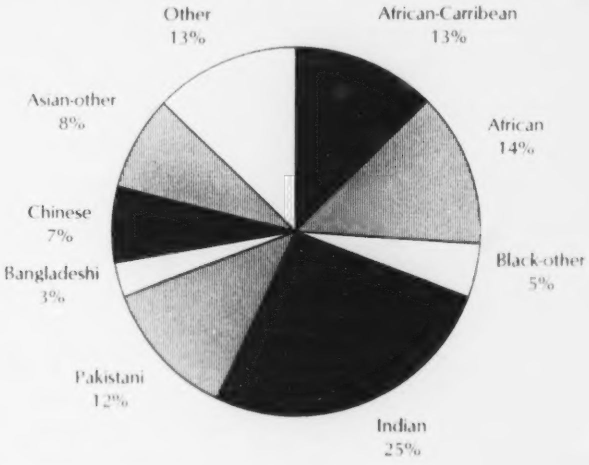
It is expected that the new unified system of admissions will reduce the amount of variation in admission rates by ethnic group that existed previously between the former polytechnic and university sectors. Also, in 1992 the CVCP issued guidelines to admissions staff on racial discrimination, and in the last few years many universities have developed further their equal opportunities policies. It is clear, though, from individual universities' (unpublished) student data that there are wide disparities in ethnic minority profiles. Also, admissions policies and practices vary considerably within, as well as between, universities. Further research would be useful at an institutional level to monitor admission rates, and uncover the causes of any racial discrimination identified, direct or indirect.

We now turn to discuss the current profile of ethnic minorities in higher education, and then turn to future trends and factors likely to influence the future supply of graduates from ethnic groups.

2.2.5 Current students in higher education

Since 1994, the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) have had responsibility for collecting, analysing and publishing data on students at all publicly funded HEIs. The HESA data is more comprehensive than previous HE student data and covers both the university and former polytechnic/college sector, which were

Figure 2.1: UK students on first degrees by ethnic group



Source: HESA, 1995

covered by separate data sources in the past. It includes all students with known ethnicity[1], not just those entering via UCAS, and gives a slightly different figure than UCAS for ethnic minority representation in 1994/95 admissions, 12.4 per cent of UK domiciled first year students (HESA, 1995).

According to HESA there were one and a half million students enrolled in publicly funded higher education institutions in the UK in 1994/95, two thirds of whom were studying on first degrees, the vast majority (800,000) in full-time study. Overall, 11.5 per cent of the total UK domiciled student population is estimated to be from ethnic minority groups (HESA, 1995).

Looking at undergraduates only, 11.3 per cent of first degree UK domiciled students and 13.5 per cent of other undergraduates (*eg* HND, DipHE) were from (known) ethnic minority groups. The largest group was Indians, representing one in four of the first degree ethnic minority student population, or 3.1 per cent of the student total. The distribution by ethnic group is shown in Figure 2.1.

By comparison, the proportion of ethnic minorities in the postgraduate population is lower: 9.1 per cent of research and 10.4 per cent of taught postgraduates (excluding international students). The distribution between ethnic groups is different also: the largest group of postgraduate research students in 1994 was Asian-other (21 per cent), followed by Indian (16 per cent) and Chinese (14 per cent); while on taught postgraduate courses the largest ethnic minority groups were African (20 per cent) and Indian (18 per cent).

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[1] This represents 70 per cent of all UK students, and 77 per cent of first year UK students.

Table 2.3: Characteristics of students: gender, age, part-time study, by ethnic group (UK domiciles)

	% female students (undergraduates)	% of part-time students (first degree)	% of first year students aged under 21 (first degree)
White	51.5	18.0	61.8
African-Caribbean	63.4	27.3	27.0
African	44.6	16.9	22.8
Black-other	57.7	33.1	30.6
Indian	47.3	10.1	74.1
Pakistani	38.1	8.1	64.5
Bangladeshi	40.1	14.4	68.2
Chinese	52.0	14.4	68.5
Other Asian	45.4	14.3	50.8
Other	50.4	47.4	54.0

Source: HESA, 1995

Other patterns in the HESA data for 1994/95 show:

- Women are unevenly represented among ethnic groups at undergraduate level (*nb* data disaggregated by level of qualification are not made available). It varies from 63.4 per cent of African-Caribbean undergraduates to 40.1 per cent of Bangladeshis and 38.1 per cent of Pakistanis. Indians and Chinese have a similar representation to whites (Table 2.3).
- Part-time study accounts for 18 per cent of first degree and almost half of other undergraduates. However, among first degree students, part-time study is more prevalent among black groups on the whole than Asians, and the percentage of Indians and Pakistanis studying part-time is only half that for Whites (Table 2.3).
- Most part-time study is taken by people aged 21 and over, and this holds true for all ethnic groups. The older age profile of black students is the main explanation for the high incidence of black students in part-time study highlighted above: less than 30 per cent of black first year degree students were aged under 21 years, compared to over 60 per cent for most other groups (Table 2.3). Furthermore, half of first year black students in degree courses were very mature, aged over 25 years on entry, compared to around a quarter for whites and less than 20 per cent of Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. It is worth noting that this older age profile for black students means that some of the comparisons with the 15 to 24 year old population are not valid.
- There is also a link between mode of study and subject choice: subjects such as medicine which have high proportions of some ethnic groups have a low incidence of part-time study. Almost five per cent of Indian first year undergraduate

students and three per cent of Pakistanis are studying medicine and dentistry compared to one per cent of whites.

- Gender differences are also apparent: African-Caribbeans are more likely than other groups to be studying subjects allied to medicine (mainly nursing) which relates to the higher proportion of female than male African-Caribbeans in the higher education student population.
- Popular subjects among specific ethnic groups are:
  - business and administrative studies: more popular choice for most ethnic minority groups than whites, but especially Africans, Indians, Pakistanis and Chinese
  - engineering and technology: a much more popular choice for African and most Asian groups than for whites
  - computer science and law: more popular choices for all ethnic minority groups than for whites (except the Chinese for law).
- By contrast, education is much less popular across the ethnic minorities.
- Qualifications on entry are also seen to vary by ethnic group (as indicated earlier in the applications data). While just over half of white and Asian first year students entered with 'A' levels or Highers, this applied to only a third of black students where other qualifications (*eg* access, vocational qualifications) were more common. There was much less disparity between the ethnic groups for part-time degree study, where only around a fifth to a quarter of first year students had 'A' level or Highers qualifications.
- Again, age is an important variable: among under-21 year olds, there was only a small difference in the proportions entering higher education with 'A' level qualifications (71 per cent of black students, 77 per cent of Asians, and 82 per cent of whites). This suggests that the reason that there are more black students with non-'A' level qualifications is mainly due to the older age profile for this group.
- Lastly, there are some HESA data on student mobility, but only by country rather than at a regional level (mainly because of the 30 per cent non-response for the ethnic minority question which was not spread evenly across the UK). As might be expected, 98 per cent of black and 95 per cent of Asian students were studying in English HEIs, compared with 84 per cent for all UK students (at all levels of study). There was much less movement, in relation to home location and location of university, of ethnic minority students between England and Scotland, and between England and Wales than occurs among White students. The dominant ethnic group in Scotland is Asian, and there are very few black students, while Wales has small numbers of both Asian and black students.

2.2.6 Student trends in higher education

There are a number of general trends which have changed the shape and size of higher education in the last decade and set the context for the growth in participation of people from ethnic minority groups. The main contextual points of note are:

- a rapid expansion in size of most universities, particularly in recent years, resulting in an overall growth in the number of students in higher education of 54 per cent between 1988/89 and 1993/94, followed by a period of consolidation in student numbers (especially of full-time first year degree students)
- more marked growth in full-time students and, in particular, in post-1992 universities (former polytechnics and colleges) between 1988/89 and 1993/94
- a rapidly rising young age participation index (18 to 19 year olds) which has risen to 30 per cent in the period 1988 to 1993, as well as an increasing index for younger mature people (21 to 24 years), from six to ten per cent
- changes to admissions policies and a broadening of subject/course provision to give a more vocational emphasis. This has contributed to the opening up of higher education to a wider range of people, including new types of students (*eg* without 'A' levels, mature entrants, part-time/distance learners).
- more marked growth in mature undergraduate students (25 years and over) since 1989, both male and female, compared to other age groups
- expansion in postgraduate study, especially part-time which has almost doubled in the last five years
- more rapid increases in some subjects than others at undergraduate level, in particular business and financial studies, multi-disciplinary studies, subjects allied to medicine (including nursing), information science, but more limited growth in engineering and technology.

While research has been undertaken on factors influencing student demand and reasons for the recent expansion and changes in HE provision (see for example: Connor *et al.*, 1996; Williams and Fry, 1994), there is no recent research specifically focusing on the effects of these wider changes on the pattern of participation by ethnic minority students.

Looking to the future, the graduate output of ethnic minorities, at least in the short term, is going to be determined by current trends in participation and the changes taking place in the higher education system. The future size, shape and funding of higher education is currently subject to review (the recently announced Dearing Inquiry) and therefore there is some uncertainty about overall future trends. The current policy of consolidation of undergraduate intake numbers and limited growth overall, is likely to continue over the next few years at least. Within that, the current trends towards greater diversification within student intakes and between institutions are likely to continue. This is likely to produce an increasing ethnic minority graduate output in the short term, although it is unlikely that their present concentration at a relatively small number of universities (mainly the post-1992 ones) and in certain subjects, is likely to change significantly. In addition, there is likely to be increasing diversity between ethnic groups, especially in their age profile, entry qualifications, gender balance and subject choice. However, it is impossible to make longer-term forecasts, and there are no supply projections or indicators in the research literature.

Some, but not all, ethnic groups, are more likely to be part of the growing number of 'non-traditional' students entering higher education — older, with GNVQ/NVQ or access qualifications, applying from a further education college, studying part-time or at a distance. On present trends, their numbers are expected to grow faster than more traditional entrants: *ie* young school leavers with 'A' levels. This may also have the effect of altering the ethnic pattern of participation in higher education.

2.3 Entry to the labour market

Compared to the evidence available about participation and routes into higher education, there is much less on outcomes and subsequent employment experiences. No data disaggregated by ethnic group are available on completion or drop-out rates, nor on qualifications obtained by higher education students (as yet). This is not surprising, as 1994 was the first year that data were collected on the ethnicity of students across the whole sector, and most universities (especially the pre-1992 ones) have only recently begun to practice ethnic monitoring. Information systems need to be more fully developed before useful monitoring of throughput can be done.

2.3.1 Graduation rates

There is evidence to suggest that some ethnic minority students do experience difficulties while at university, academically and socially (*eg* Walsh, Hampton and Bain, 1995 (Glasgow); Bird, 1992 (West of England); Williams, 1989 (Wolverhampton)). This may lead to greater numbers dropping out or stopping out temporarily, but there is insufficient research on attrition rates in UK higher education to draw conclusions about factors of relevance, which may or may not include ethnicity. Until recently, non-completion on UK degree courses was low, much lower than in other European countries or the USA, and there was little interest in measuring it. Recent evidence shows it to be increasing, and there are different patterns from university to university. This is currently being investigated more fully by individual institutions and the HEFCE.

2.3.2 Graduate labour market contextual changes

Before discussing the available evidence relating specifically to the employment of ethnic minority graduates, it is worth noting some general contextual changes over the last five years or so which have affected the experiences of graduates in general as they seek their first job. Some of these changes were highlighted in the interviews with employers, which are reported in Chapter 6. The main points to note are:

Fluctuations in demand: the severe recession of the early 1990s produced cutbacks among the major recruiters of graduates, and although there has been some recovery, the overall level of vacancies specifically for graduates has still not returned to that of the late 1980s (AGR, 1995a).

Competition: graduates in the 1990s face a more competitive and uncertain labour market did than even their predecessors of a decade ago. This is the consequence of a faster growth in supply than demand and the increased diversification of the graduate labour market.

Changes in 'graduate jobs': as the supply of graduates has expanded, the UK economy has had to absorb an increasing number of graduates. This happened at a time not only of economic recession, but also of business restructuring, in particular among large blue chip companies which had traditionally recruited large numbers of graduates. As a result, the number of vacancies in formal graduate trainee schemes leading to fast track advancement (traditionally thought of as 'graduate jobs') has been declining (AGR, 1993). As the CBI recently put it: *'Few graduates can expect automatically to enter a specific career and reach a predictable level of employment and salary. A degree makes a graduate more likely to get a highly skilled job sooner, but it no longer guarantees a prestigious job.'* (CBI, 1994). Many employers are taking advantage of the current slack in the graduate market to employ graduates in jobs which previously they would not have done, especially if the graduate is likely to be more competent than a non-graduate (*eg* in sales, or publishing). Not all of the graduates in employment feel they are using their skills and potential to the full (Mason, 1995; Connor and Pollard, 1996).

New types of recruiters: small firms are becoming more important as recruiters of graduates. They have varying needs, and tend to use different recruitment methods than the larger recruiters, relying more on contacts within individual universities and local advertising, and less on the traditional 'milkround' of university visits. Small firms are still often viewed by graduates as offering more limited career opportunities and training/development. There is a lack of knowledge, however, about their requirements and demand trends.

Targeting: there is a trend among the established graduate recruiters to target a smaller number of universities in their recruitment strategy. They tend to be the more academically prestigious ones, or those offering particularly relevant courses. Some employers target the pre-1992 universities exclusively (where ethnic minority representation is comparatively low).

Changes in selection methods: competence-based criteria for selection of graduates is increasingly popular and there is less reliance on graduates' curricula vitae. This is considered to be a more objective selection method and of more relevance to the jobs graduates will be expected to do.

Quality issues: employers are increasingly looking for graduates with good personal skills as well as intellectual and, in some cases, technical skills. They are increasingly concerned about the quality of graduate applicants (AGR, 1995b), in particular poor presentation skills.

2.3.3 Employment of ethnic minority graduates

There have been only two significant research studies undertaken specifically on the employment of recent graduates from ethnic minorities in the UK. The first was in 1987 by Brennan and McGeevor (sponsored by the CRE) based on a follow-up survey of a sample of polytechnic and college graduates in 1982, mostly Asians, and mostly with conventional qualifications (two or more 'A' levels). The ethnic minorities in the sample of 2,540 graduates comprised six per cent of the total. They covered a range of subjects and were drawn from 19 institutions. This was too small scale a study to justify firm conclusions, but the authors felt that there were sufficiently strong patterns and consistencies in the data to suggest the following:

- Ethnic minority graduates at that time experienced greater difficulties than other graduates in obtaining employment: greater proportions were unemployed 12 months after graduation and the ethnic minority graduates themselves perceived greater difficulties than their white counterparts.
- Jobs actually gained were inferior on several measures to those of other graduates (*eg* salary levels and qualifications needed).

In 1990 the CRE published a further study by Brennan and McGeevor, which followed up some of the graduates in the earlier survey. It also included new research on university graduates, and interviews with graduates, university careers advisers and academic staff. This study provided more detailed information about the labour market experiences of ethnic minority graduates and gave a more comprehensive coverage of the higher education population. It found that:

- Subject courses were a strong determinant of future employment. As some ethnic groups were concentrated in certain courses (see section 2.2.5 above) it followed that there were concentrations of ethnic minority graduates in certain types of job and employment sectors.

- Subject studied did not explain all the differences in employment profiles. There was a greater tendency for African-Caribbeans to go into the public sector and Asians to be self-employed.
- Although graduates from all ethnic minority groups were more likely to be unemployed initially they, like all graduates, did not experience long-term unemployment.
- Ethnic minority graduates were less likely to be satisfied with their job. There was some evidence to suggest, though not conclusively, that it was at a lower level than among white graduates, and that promotion for ethnic minority graduates was harder to obtain.
- Ethnic origin was the main difficulty mentioned by ethnic minority graduates in securing employment, and they attended more interviews before obtaining a job offer before.
- The perception and anticipation of possible difficulties in securing jobs had the effect of focusing job search on employers known to be more sympathetic to ethnic minorities.
- Ethnic minority graduates tended to place considerable value on education as an avenue towards employment opportunity. On the whole, they were satisfied with their experiences in higher education, but were much less satisfied with the resulting rewards in the labour market.
- While no substantial evidence of discrimination by employers was actually obtained, the researchers concluded that there was no other possible way to explain the problems many graduates in the survey encountered in their careers.

Following that report, many recommendations were made to universities and employers about ways in which some of these issues could be addressed. Several initiatives have been taken, notably the production of a guide by AGCAS on equal opportunities in selection and recruitment, the development of a Mentoring Scheme to help ethnic minority students into work (see Chapter 6), individual company initiatives to improve selection practices and to provide more work experience, and of course the start of regular monitoring of ethnic minority participation in universities through HESA.

The existing research therefore provides some evidence of racial disadvantage among graduates, but is less conclusive about experiences of different ethnic groups. It also relates to a period in the mid-1980s when the graduate labour market looked rather different from today in terms of its scope and breadth, the nature of graduate jobs, and the vastly expanded numbers and diversity of graduates being produced each year.

2.3.4 Ethnic minorities and the labour market

We can turn to the general employment literature to obtain some further insight into the position of ethnic minority graduates in the labour market.

Firstly, education to degree level in the working population varies considerably by ethnic group (Jones, 1993). While eight per cent of whites are educated to this level against nine per cent for ethnic minorities as a whole, the latter masks huge differences between groups — ranging from three per cent for African-Caribbeans to 13 per cent for African-Asians. Among the younger age group (16 to 24 years), four per cent of whites held degrees compared to five per cent of people from ethnic minorities, but this included 13 per cent of African-Asian and Chinese, and one per cent of African-Caribbean.

Secondly, while most analyses show that younger people in all ethnic groups are more likely to have degree qualifications than older people, there is also evidence to show that some ethnic minority students are more persistent with their education ambitions than others. Thus, we saw above, section 2.2.5, that considerably more black students entered higher education aged 25 years and over, and so it is not surprising to find that the proportion of black degree holders aged 25 to 29 (five per cent) is considerably higher than those aged 16 to 24 years. This could have implications for their success in the labour market, however, if they were competing directly against much younger graduates.

Ethnic minority men and women are strongly over-represented among the unemployed. The rate for ethnic minority women is 16 per cent, far higher than the six per cent for whites, and the corresponding figures for ethnic minority men are 20 per cent compared with 11 per cent for white men (EOC, 1994). Unemployment rates remain far higher for ethnic minorities even when they have high level qualifications (above 'A' level or equivalent). In 1993, 14 per cent of highly qualified ethnic minority men, and nine per cent of women, were unemployed, compared to five and four per cent respectively of white men and women. The highest unemployment levels for women were found among Pakistani/Bangladeshis, and for men among both black people and Pakistani/Bangladeshis.

As mentioned above, the available research on ethnic minority graduates suggests that they are likely to have less challenging and rewarding jobs than whites, despite the introduction by employers of equal opportunities policies and equal opportunities legislation in recent years. Jones (1993) analysed the LFS to see if this could be confirmed and found considerable diversity between ethnic groups and gender. Without taking qualification into consideration, he concluded that there was strong evidence that, for men, certain minority groups had achieved parity with white men in terms of the proportion in top level jobs, but that other minority groups were at substantially lower levels than whites. Once level of qualification was controlled for, a more uneven pattern of disadvantage could be observed. With the exception of African-Caribbeans, ethnic minority men with higher level qualifications were more likely than white men to hold professional level jobs. Chinese, African-Asian and Indian were more likely than other ethnic minority groups, and around twice as likely as whites, to hold this level of job.

For women the pattern was less clear because of their greater concentration, compared to men, in lower level jobs. More white women with higher level qualifications were in managerial or professional jobs than ethnic minority women as a whole with these qualifications, but Indian and Chinese women were better qualified than other groups in this job category. In particular, the proportion of female Indians and Chinese with 'A' levels or above who hold professional jobs was twice to three times that for whites.

2.3.5 Specific occupations

There are some examples of particular professions restricting the opportunities of ethnic minorities. Accountancy was an example of this when it was investigated by the CRE in 1987. It was found to have a disparity between black and white selection rates at all stages of recruitment into chartered accountancy training contracts, suggesting the existence of some discrimination, albeit indirect. Some of the sources of disadvantage highlighted were firms' use of 'A' level point scores, positions of responsibility in schools and choice of work experience as measures of academic attainment, social skills, leadership, *etc*. These generally favoured white candidates. There were also influences on candidates of stereotyping and assumptions about ethnic minorities which shaped their behaviour and expectations, and some evidence that interviewers were recruiting in their own image, which led to higher white success rates.

The law profession has also been subject to scrutiny about its recruitment and career development practices. Traditional practices, administrative convenience and a lack of social responsibility of some legal firms, have been highlighted from within the profession as barriers to wider access to ethnic minorities (see for example King and Israel, 1989).

Difficulties in attracting ethnic minorities into teaching has already been mentioned above. The HEFCE provided pump-priming support to projects which would encourage more ethnic minority students into teacher training. Several barriers to recruitment were identified, including low status of teaching and poor image as a profession, lack of careers information, and few role models. The need for alternative routes into teacher training and improved admissions processes were also identified. The HEFCE-funded projects also explored a number of issues within the training process, including problems of isolation and racism, and the appropriateness of the curriculum, as well as a review of admissions policies.

2.4 Summary

This chapter has highlighted the main points in the existing literature and data on the participation of ethnic minorities in higher education and their employment outcomes. The main issues it highlights are as follows.

- There is growing participation of ethnic minorities as a whole in higher education. However, there are disparities between individual ethnic groups, with uneven distribution between levels, modes of study, subjects and institutions, as well as age, gender, entry qualifications and educational routes.
- Growth in ethnic minority student numbers partly reflects the wider changes taking place in higher education relating to widening access and broadening provision, as well as to improvements in the educational attainment of young people, including ethnic minorities.
- A combination of factors of influence explain the differential participation rates by individual ethnic group. These include: education routes followed, academic achievement, early career guidance and subject choice, the attitude, culture and proximity to home of individual universities, and the composition of the various ethnic groups in terms of age, gender balance, geographical distribution, socio-economic status, and attitude towards the value of education.
- There is evidence that some ethnic minority students experience more difficulties while at university, but the evidence is inconclusive on its affect on non-completion and subsequent experiences in the labour market.
- Evidence from previous follow-up studies of graduates show that ethnic minority graduates experience greater difficulties in securing employment initially, as well as discrimination from employers or in access to further professional training.
- Other evidence from the labour market shows that the extent of racial disadvantage is more complex, affecting particular ethnic groups or parts of them. Although unemployment levels among ethnic minorities remains higher than among whites, regardless of qualification level, some ethnic groups have achieved parity with whites in some professional/managerial occupations.
- Much of the existing research on higher education participation and entry to the labour market was undertaken in a different context from today, when higher education and the graduate labour market were smaller in size and less diverse. There is a need to undertake new research which

takes into consideration the current environment and challenges faced by recruiters and graduates. This is the subject of the next chapter which presents the findings of the follow-up survey of 1993 graduates. It presents new evidence of recent labour market experiences of ethnic minority graduates, and picks up on some of the issues identified in this review of previous research relating to differences between individual ethnic groups.

3. Graduates' Progress in the Labour Market

This chapter, and the two which follow, present findings from the survey and interviews with graduates. These were undertaken in order to provide more up-to-date insights into the labour market experiences of ethnic minority graduates and thus fill some of the gaps identified in the research review.

This chapter focuses on the progress of graduates in the labour market over the two and a half year period since graduation. It draws mainly from the survey data. In view of the variations in education and employment experiences of different ethnic groups, as discussed in the previous chapter, the aim has been, whenever possible, to highlight any significant differences between ethnic groups. However, given the small size of the sample, some of the results must be considered with a certain degree of caution. In some cases these are better interpreted as useful directions for further inquiry, rather than conclusive findings.

It should also be noted that this was a retrospective survey, and therefore subject to the usual sources of 'memory' errors. While the survey covered a relatively recent period of time, with this type of study there is always the danger that respondents will omit or provide inadequate information, particularly on short-term activities (*eg* short periods of unemployment, temporary work) or when required to provide numerical information (*eg* salary level).

3.1 Survey sample

As outlined in Chapter 1, the survey was conducted in two stages. First, a postal survey of a random sample of 1993 graduates from four universities was undertaken. Then, survey respondents from ethnic minorities were matched with a sub-sample of white participants by gender, age, type of university and degree subject. Previous research (*eg* Brennan and McGeevor, 1993) has shown that these variables have a significant influence on graduates' early careers, and it was therefore necessary to control for their effect. In addition, when appropriate, the impact of the other extraneous variables (*eg* class of degree) was controlled for in the analysis. The matched sample, on which this chapter is based, comprised 272 graduates — 136 white and 136 from ethnic minority graduates (distributed between individual ethnic groups as shown in Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Respondents by ethnic origin

Ethnic origin	N	%
Black African	4	1.5
Black Caribbean	14	5.1
Black other	7	2.6
Indian	39	14.3
Pakistani	23	8.5
Chinese	11	4.0
Other Asian	10	3.7
Mixed ethnic origin	16	5.9
Other*	12	4.4
Whites	136	50.0
Total	*272*	

**This category includes Turkish, Turkish Cypriot, Persian and Romany respondents*

Source: IES Survey

3.1.1 Overall survey response

The survey covered four universities, two of the 'old' type (pre-1992) and two 'new' (post-1992). They were selected as contrasting universities, taking into consideration a number of variables: *eg* geographical location, ethnic minority composition, type of intake and subject mix. A brief description of each university is given in Appendix 2.

Questionnaires were sent to a random sample of 3,421 1993 graduates from these four universities, which represented just over half of the total graduate output from the four in that year. Completed questionnaires were received from 1,177 graduates, a survey response rate of 37 per cent. As discussed earlier in Chapter 1, this was lower than expected and was due mainly to two main factors: the quality of addresses held by universities and the short timescale of the survey which allowed only one reminder to be sent (*nb* a further 298 questionnaires have been received since closing the survey; if time had allowed these to be included, the response rate would have been 46 per cent).

The overall survey response was slightly biased towards mature graduates and women, when compared to nationally available data (see Appendix 2). However, this is likely to be explained by the university sample selection: the two post-1992 universities had a considerable bias towards subjects where women and mature students are better represented (*eg* arts/humanities, subjects allied to medicine) than nationally, and one of them had a reputation for attracting high proportions of mature graduates.

3.1.2 Matched sample

As mentioned above, the survey analysis was based on a matched working sample of 272 graduates. Sixty-one per cent were from the two post-1992 universities (*ie* former polytechnics) and 39 per cent from pre-1992 universities. National data for the same cohort (see Appendix 2) show that, in 1993, one third of students graduated from post-1992 universities, compared with 65 per cent from pre-1992 universities (CSU, 1994; USR, 1994), which shows the extent to which the sample was biased towards post-1992 universities.

Compared with national data on ethnic minority distribution (see Chapter 2), Asians were considerably better represented than Black graduates. Unfortunately, no Bangladeshi graduates responded to the survey, and so this group was not represented at all in the sample. However, as indicated in the previous chapter, Bangladeshis represent less than one per cent of the total intake to full-time first degrees.

In terms of entry qualifications, respondents were similar to the population as a whole (*ie* all first degree students who completed their course in 1993). Seventy-two per cent of respondents had traditional entry qualifications (*ie* two or more 'A' levels).

Mature graduates (*ie* 21 and over at the time of entry) were over-represented in the sample: 40 per cent of respondents were included in this category, while the corresponding national figures for 1993 were 13 per cent for pre-1992 universities, and 20 per cent for post-1992 ones (UCCA, 1991; PCAS, 1991). However, as shown earlier in Chapter 2, some ethnic groups (in particular black students) have an older age profile than white students and so this bias in the sample was to be expected. It was also due to the initial university sample selection (see above).

With regard to degree subject, the distribution of the matched sample was broadly in line with national figures (see Appendix 2), particularly in relation to the most popular subjects (*eg* social sciences, business studies, arts and humanities).

3.1.3 Survey coverage

The areas covered by the survey included:

- education and work experience before entering higher education
- influences on choice of university
- post-graduation employment status at six monthly intervals
- first post-graduation and current jobs
- unemployment
- further study.

3.2 General overview

One of the main aims of the study was to investigate graduates' early employment histories, in order to establish if any variations emerged in the career patterns of respondents from different ethnic groups. In the questionnaire, respondents provided information about their experiences after graduation at six monthly intervals. They were asked to categorise their labour market status at each point in time under five broad headings:

- permanent employment: a full- or part-time job intended to last for more than three months, including voluntary work, internship and training placements
- short-term employment: a temporary post intended to last less than three months
- further study: full-or part-time study or continuing education leading to a qualification
- unemployed: not in work but seeking employment
- not available for employment: neither in employment nor in further study, and not looking for either.

This information allowed a sequential picture of career stages and movements to be built. In particular we were able to test previous research findings, which have shown that variations in the employment experiences of graduates from different ethnic groups tend to diminish or even disappear over time. Table 3.2 shows the employment status of ethnic minority and white graduates at six monthly intervals after graduation.

Overall, the results in Table 3.2 show some predictable patterns, with the proportion of graduates in permanent employment increasing over time, while the number of respondents in short term employment, further study, and unemployed decreased steadily. With regard to variations between different ethnic groups, the data show some small, but consistent differences. At every stage, white respondents were slightly more likely to be in permanent employment than ethnic minority graduates. However, the differences are small and not statistically significant. Our data on permanent employment seems insufficient to confirm or refute previous research findings (see for example Brennan and McGeevor, 1990), which have shown that the gap between ethnic minority and white graduates tends to narrow over time.

Similarly, at every point in time, ethnic minorities were more likely to be unemployed, even though for two of these periods (*ie* June and December 1994) there was only one percentage point difference. With regard to short-term employment, the pattern is less clear. Initially ethnic minorities seemed less likely than whites to be in short-term employment. However, after the first six months the situation was reversed, again with no evidence that the gap between the two groups narrowed over

Table 3.2: Ethnicity by respondents' employment status at six monthly intervals

Employment status	Ethnic minorities %	Whites %
6 months after graduation — Dec. 1993		
Permanent Employment	47	53
Short-term employment	12	15
Further study	18	14
Unemployed	18	15
Not available for employment	4	3
12 months after graduation — June 1994		
Permanent Employment	57	64
Short-term employment	12	9
Further study	18	13
Unemployed	12	8
Not available for employment	2	6
18 months after graduation — Dec. 1994		
Permanent Employment	63	70
Short-term employment	10	7
Further study	16	13
Unemployed	8	7
Not available for employment	3	2
2 years after graduation — June 1995		
Permanent Employment	68	77
Short-term employment	8	4
Further study	13	13
Unemployed	7	4
Not available for employment	4	2
Employment status at the time of the survey — Dec. 1995		
Permanent Employment	72	77
Short-term employment	7	3
Further study	10	12
Unemployed	10	7
Not available for employment	0.7	0.7

NB: The analysis included 272 cases, 136 from each group.

Source: IES Survey

time. Similarly, the results on further study do not show a very clear pattern. Ethnic minority graduates were more likely to be found in this category in the first 18 months, no difference emerged after two years, while slightly fewer ethnic minority graduates were in further study at the time of the survey (*ie* December 1995).

Our survey findings on respondents' status at six monthly intervals partly confirm some of the differences in post-graduation employment between ethnic minorities and whites highlighted by previous studies (*eg* Brennan and McGeevor, 1987 and 1990). However, the empirical data are insufficient to establish any conclusive patterns. On the one hand, differences between the employment status of ethnic minorities and whites were small, and on the whole not statistically significant. On the other hand, their consistency (particularly in relation to permanent employment and unemployment) suggests that these would need to be explored further by a larger scale investigation.

Respondents' career patterns are explored in greater depth in section 3.7 below, where work history data are analysed in different ways to establish if and to what extent differences between ethnic minority and white graduates persist. First, we look at respondents' first jobs after graduation, their current jobs, experiences of unemployment, and taking further studies.

3.3 First job after graduation

3.3.1 Time taken to secure first job

On the whole, ethnic minority graduates took longer to secure their first job than white graduates, the mean number of months for ethnic minorities being 4.6 compared with 3.9 for white graduates. This difference was mainly due to the longer time it took black and Indian respondents to find their first job (respective mean number of months was 5.0 and 4.9), while the average for the other ethnic minority groups was similar to that of white graduates.

When controlling for class of degree, however, this difference reduces considerably. Ethnic minority and white graduates with a first or upper second class degree took 3.3 and 3.5 months on average respectively to secure their first job.

3.3.2 Number of applications made

Respondents were asked about the number of jobs they had applied for before securing their first post. The number of applications have been grouped into three categories as indicated in Table 3.3. The survey findings confirm previous research (Brennan and McGeevor, 1990) that ethnic minority graduates needed to apply for more jobs than white graduates in order to secure employment. No significant variations emerged between different ethnic minority groups.

3.3.3 Type of first job

The proportion of ethnic minorities whose first job was full time (75 per cent) was lower than for whites (83 per cent). However, this difference was not statistically significant. Blacks and Indians were almost as likely as whites to have secured a full-time job

Table 3.3: Respondents' first job by ethnicity and number of applications

	Ethnic minorities		Whites	
	N	%	N	%
1-2 applications	32	28	52	42
3-15 applications	37	32	38	31
More than 15 applications	46	40	33	27
Total	*115*		*123*	

Source: IES Survey

after graduation, while below 70 per cent of graduates from other ethnic minority groups had done so.

Gender differences emerged in relation to employment status: white women were more likely to work full time (88 per cent) than women from ethnic minorities (74 per cent). The association was rather weak but statistically significant. Virtually no difference emerged between the employment status of ethnic minority and white men, 77 per cent and 78 per cent respectively had a full-time job.

Ethnic minority and white respondents were equally likely to be on a short-term contract, the respective figures were 29 per cent, and 28 per cent.

The number of cases was insufficient to explore differences in terms of self-employment (only eight graduates had been self-employed in their first job), voluntary work (only nine graduates) and training placement/internship (12 graduates). However, by aggregating these four categories, a 'non-standard employment' variable was created which showed a small difference by ethnic group: 49 per cent of ethnic minorities and 52 per cent of whites were found in 'non-standard' employment.

3.3.4 Occupation

Respondents' job titles were coded against Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) categories, with those in SOC categories 10 to 30 (which include managers and administrators, professionals, associate professionals and technical staff) classified as having a 'professional job'. Forty-four per cent of ethnic minority graduates had a 'professional' job compared with 41 per cent of white graduates.

3.3.5 Salary

The median salary of respondents in full-time, permanent employment was lower for whites than for ethnic minorities; the respective medians were £10,000 and £11,500. This difference cannot be accounted for by high salaries in one particular ethnic minority group, because the median for all groups was higher than for whites. The findings on job level and salary seem to suggest that initially, ethnic minorities who found employment were in a more favourable labour market position. However, the difference between the proportion of ethnic minority and white graduates in a professional job was very small, and not statistically significant. In addition, higher salaries might partly reflect the fact that ethnic minorities were more likely to have been working in London (see below).

3.3.6 Type of employer

The Brennan and McGeevor (1990) follow-up study of graduates during the 1980s found that ethnic minorities (and African-Caribbean in particular) were more likely than white graduates to be employed by a public sector organisation. As shown in Table 3.4, the survey of 1993 graduates indicates that ethnic minorities were slightly more likely than whites to be employed in the public sector. They were also more likely to be found in the services sector (see Table 3.5). However, these differences were not very large, and neither association was statistically significant.

Table 3.4: Respondents' first job by ethnicity and private/public sector

	Ethnic minorities		Whites	
Sector	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
Private	68	54	75	59
Public	58	46	52	41
Total	*126*		*127*	

Source: IES Survey

Table 3.5: Respondents' first job by ethnicity and employment sector

	Ethnic minorities		Whites	
Sector	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
Services	108	86	100	79
Industrial	18	14	27	21
Total	*126*		*127*	

Source: IES Survey

Table 3.6: Respondents' first job by ethnicity and employer's size

No. of employees	**Ethnic minorities**		**Whites**	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**
Under 100	29	40	26	35
100 to 499	11	15	18	24
Over 500	32	44	31	41
Total	*72*		*75*	

Source: IES Survey

Similarly, no significant differences emerged in relation to size of employer. As indicated in Table 3.6, ethnic minority graduates were slightly more likely than white graduates to be employed by large (*ie* over 500 employees) or small (*ie* under 100 employees) organisations. On the other hand, white graduates were more likely to be employed by medium sized employers (*ie* between 100 and 499 employees).

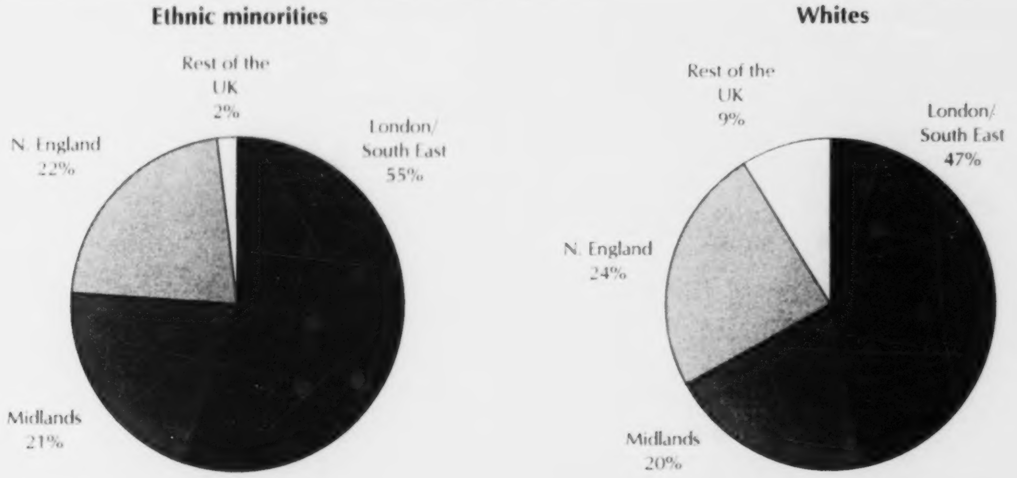
3.3.7 Geographical location

Figure 3.1 shows the geographical location of respondents' first job. Ethnic minorities were more likely than whites to be working in London and the South East, black graduates in particular were heavily concentrated in the London area.

3.3.8 Summary

The survey findings in relation to respondents' initial employment have shown that, compared with their white peers, ethnic minority graduates were more likely to be in a professional job and have a higher starting salary. However, the difference in job level was small, and higher salaries could reflect ethnic minorities' concentration in the London area. When looking at other measures of 'employment success', ethnic minorities seemed to be in a less favourable position. For example, it took them longer to secure employment, they had to apply for more jobs, and ethnic minority women were less likely than the rest of the sample to be in a full-time post. Differences in terms of employment sector and size of firm were small and not statistically significant. Finally, there was an indication that class of degree could account for some variations between different ethnic groups. For example, by controlling for this variable, ethnic differences in relation to the number of months it took to secure employment virtually disappeared.

Figure 3.1: Location of first post-graduation job



Source: IES Survey

3.4 Current employment

The respondents' current employment situation was explored in more detail. As well as gathering information on their current job's characteristics (*eg* status, job title, salary, *etc.*), issues around perceptions of job 'quality', promotion opportunities and work values were also explored.

Thirty-five per cent of ethnic minorities and 44 per cent of whites were still in their first job at the time of the survey, that is, two and a half years after graduation.

3.4.1 Job characteristics

Two and a half years after graduation, ethnic minorities were still less likely than whites to be working full time, the respective figures were 89 and 97 per cent. However, this was not true for Indians who were almost as likely as white graduates to have a full-time job (*ie* 96 per cent). While gender differences emerged again, these were much smaller than the differences found with the first job, and were not statistically significant.

We did not have enough cases to permit analysis of the data of respondents in self-employment (eight in total), in voluntary work (one), and on a short-term term contract (13). We therefore cannot establish if, at this stage, any difference existed in terms of 'standard' employment, as was the case with first jobs.

Using the SOC classification for jobs, the findings again show that ethnic minority graduates were more likely than their white counterparts to have a 'professional job'; the respective figures were 37 and 26 per cent. However, the initial advantage ethnic minorities had in their first job in terms of salary, seemed to disappear in the current post. The current median starting salary for ethnic minorities was £13,500 compared with £14,000 for whites. The number of cases in some of the sub-groups was rather small, but current median salary seemed to be particularly low for black graduates (£12,750). If one considers that black respondents were heavily concentrated in London, the extent of disadvantage in terms of earnings appears even greater.

The differences in employment sector, highlighted earlier in the section on first job, almost disappear when looking at current job. Forty-three per cent of ethnic minorities and 41 per cent of whites were working in the public sector; 81 per cent of ethnic minorities and 83 per cent of whites were working in the service sector (Tables 3.7, 3.8).

Differences in terms of size of firm emerged again in relation to respondents' current job. However, compared with whites, ethnic minorities were now less likely to be working in a large organisation, and more likely to be found in medium and small sized companies (Table 3.9).

Table 3.7: Respondents' current job by ethnicity and private/public sector

Sector	Ethnic minorities		Whites	
	N	%	N	%
Private	42	58	39	59
Public	31	43	27	41
Total	*73*		*66*	

Source: IES Survey

Table 3.8: Respondents' current job by ethnicity and employment sector

Sector	Ethnic minorities		Whites	
	N	%	N	%
Services	59	81	57	83
Industrial	14	19	11	16
Total	*73*		*68*	

Source: IES Survey

Table 3.9: Respondents' current job by ethnicity and employer's size

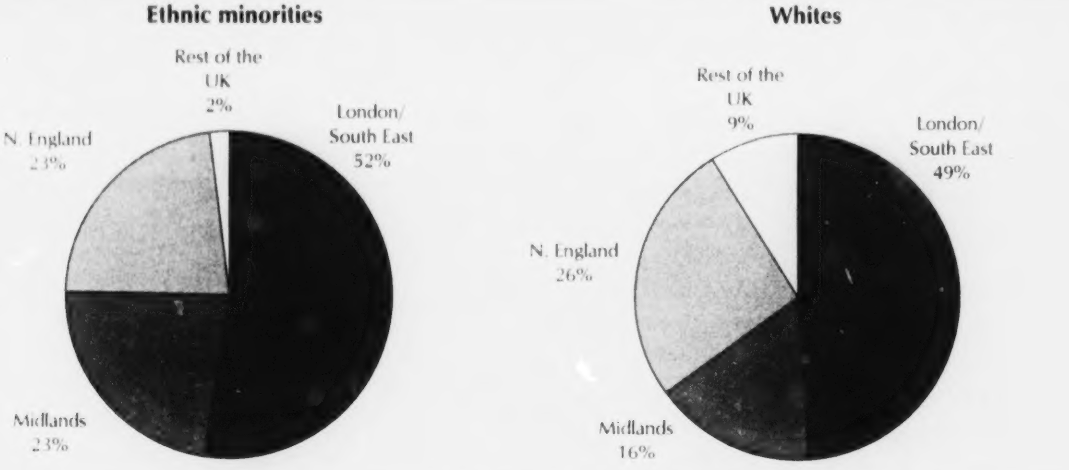
No. of employees	Ethnic minorities		Whites	
	N	%	N	%
Under 100	23	34	19	28
100 to 499	18	29	13	19
Over 500	26	39	35	52
Total	*67*		*67*	

Source: IES Survey

The geographical location of respondents' current job (Figure 3.2) shows similar patterns to those which emerged in relation to initial employment. Blacks were again found to be heavily concentrated in London, while the other ethnic minority groups more evenly distributed in three geographical areas, *ie* London/South East, Midlands and North England.

These findings on respondents' current employment situation add to the complexity of the picture which emerged from the analysis of their first job. Some of differences between ethnic minority and white graduates persisted — for example, the former were still more likely to be found in a professional job. Other early variations disappeared, for instance, ethnic minorities were almost as likely as whites to be employed currently in the private sector. Finally, the initial advantage ethnic minorities had in relation to salary levels disappeared in their current post; they were now earning less than their white peers, while being more concentrated in the London area.

Figure 3.2: Location of current job



Source: IES Survey

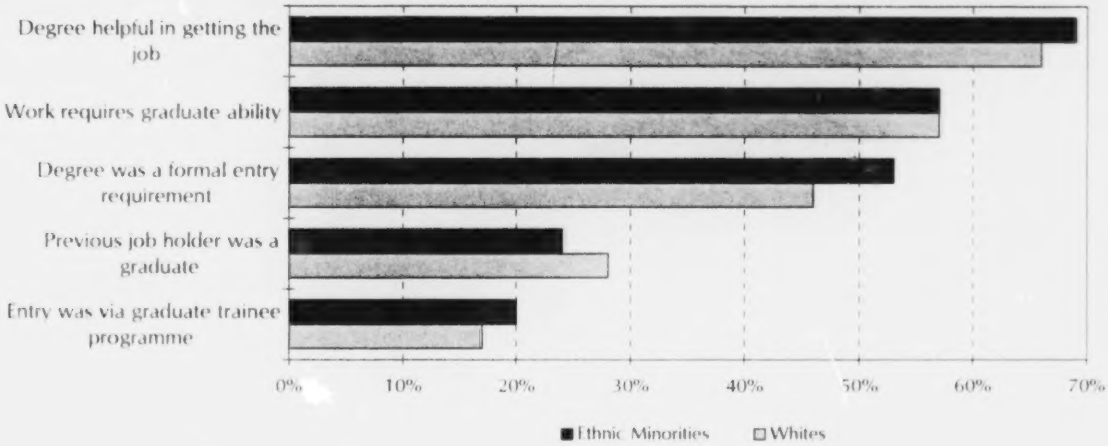
3.4.2 Perception of job quality and work values

A number of questions were included to gain a better understanding of respondents' perception of their current job, promotion opportunities, work values and any difficulties they might have faced in their current post.

Information was gathered to establish whether respondents felt they were in a graduate level job. In recent years, there has been a considerable reduction in the number of 'traditional' graduate posts (*eg* a graduate training programme in a large company), and wide variations have emerged in graduates' career paths. These changes have led to a debate about what constitutes a graduate level job, and how graduate under-employment can be measured. Using the findings from other studies (*eg* Connor and Pollard, 1996), we devised a classification to establish the extent to which respondents regarded themselves as being in a graduate level job. Figure 3.3 shows the proportion of ethnic minority and white respondents who believed their current job constituted graduate level employment according to a number of different measures. The findings present a rather mixed picture. Ethnic minorities were more likely than whites to report that a degree was a formal entry requirement or helpful in securing the job, and were also more likely to have entered via a graduate training programme. No difference between the two groups emerged in relation to work which required graduate ability, while whites were more likely than ethnic minorities to say that the previous job holder was a graduate.

Replies to the question on perception of one's job were also scored on a five point scale, with a higher score indicating that this was more likely to be regarded as a graduate job. The analysis shows virtually no difference between ethnic minorities as a whole and whites, their respective mean scores being 6.9

Figure 3.3: Measures of graduate level employment reported by ethnic minorities and whites

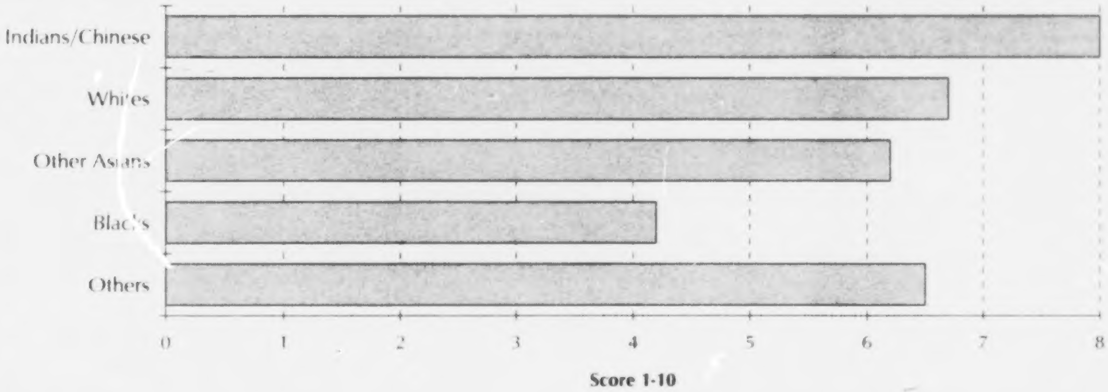


Source: IES Survey

and 6.7. However, as indicated in Figure 3.4, variations emerged between the mean scores of particular ethnic minority groups. At the two extremes, there were black graduates with a low score of 4.2, and Indians and Chinese with a high score of 8.0, while the other groups were clustered around the average for the sample as a whole.

A question was also included to establish if and to what extent respondents believed they were under-employed in their current job. Table 3.10 shows that 58 per cent of whites did not feel under-employed, the equivalent figure for ethnic minorities was 41 per cent. A considerably higher proportion of ethnic minorities than whites felt they were slightly under-employed. However, only a small difference emerged between the two groups in relation to those who believed they were 'very under-employed' in their current job.

Figure 3.4: Mean scores of the extent current job was perceived as graduate level employment



Source: IES Survey

Table 3.10: Respondents' current job by ethnicity and under-employment

Feel under-employed?	Ethnic minorities		Whites	
	N	%	N	%
Not at all	46	41	65	58
Slightly	35	31	20	18
Very	31	28	28	25
Total	*112*		*113*	

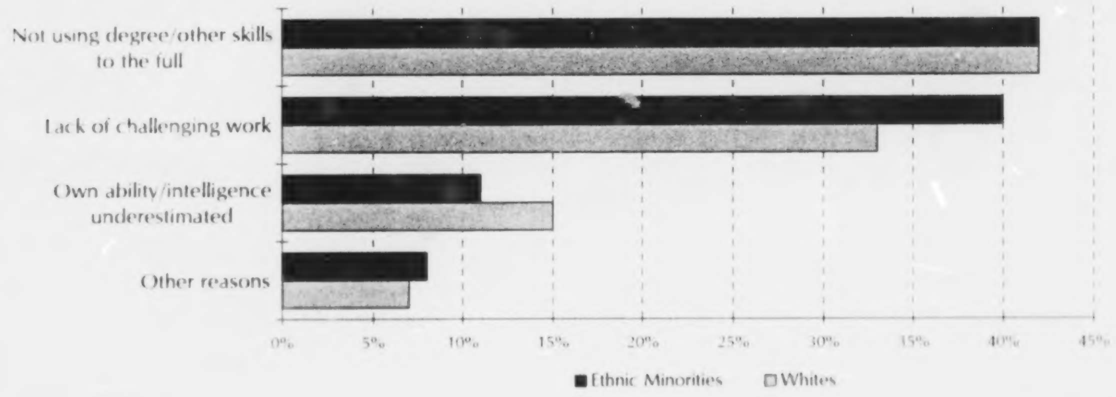
Source: IES Survey

In an open ended question, respondents were asked to explain in what ways they felt they were under-employed. The responses were grouped into four broad categories. As shown in Figure 3.5, equal proportions of ethnic minorities and whites believed they were not using their degree knowledge and skills to the full. A higher proportion of ethnic minorities reported a lack of challenging work, while a slightly higher proportion of white respondents felt their ability and intelligence were underestimated in their current job.

Disappointment with the 'quality' of one's job and with employment opportunities was widespread, and was reported by both ethnic minorities and whites. This seemed mainly to be related to the graduate job market situation, rather than perceived discrimination or disadvantage. The comments below illustrate the 'state' of the graduate labour market as perceived by survey respondents from different groups.

> *'There are no opportunities at all for Law graduates and the situation does not seem to be getting better. Having made over 500 applications for Articles I had to look for an alternative career ie teaching. I feel extremely disheartened.' (Indian graduate)*
>
> *I have been depressed about my experience of looking for a job. Although my current job is mundane and routine clerical work I had to take it because I had no other offers . . . I am amazed at the lack of*

Figure 3.5: Reasons for feeling underemployed using ethnic minority and white respondents



Source: IES Survey

Table 3.11: Respondents' current job by ethnicity and promotion opportunities

Promotion opportunities	Ethnic minorities		Whites	
	N	%	N	%
Applied for promotion	16	17	14	15
Considered for promotion	26	28	28	30
Been promoted	18	20	25	27

** Percentages were calculated out of the respective total number of respondents from ethnic minority and white groups who answered 'yes' to these questions.*

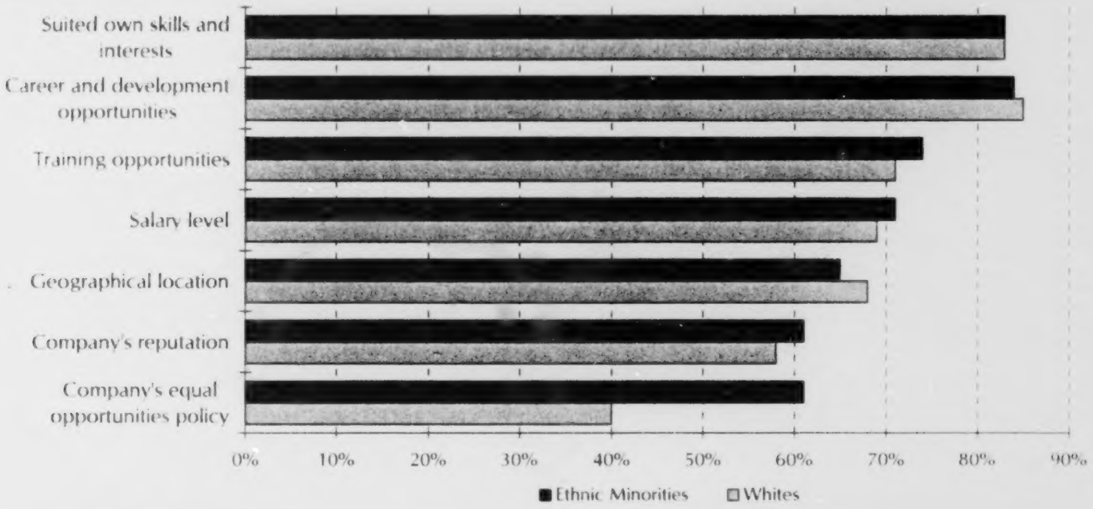
Source: IES Survey

> *graduate trainee positions available. At times I felt that my degree was a waste of time and that education is not valued.' (White graduate)*
>
> *I was very dissatisfied in my first job, I felt I was held back by my immediate manager and I wasn't given the opportunity to develop.' (Black graduate)*

The survey included a number of questions on promotion opportunities. As indicated in Table 3.11, similar proportions of ethnic minority and white respondents had applied for, and been considered for, promotion. However, whites seemed more likely to have been promoted than ethnic minorities, but the numbers in these categories were rather small and the association was not statistically significant. Finally, self-rated promotion prospects measured on a one to five scale show that expectations were lowest among black respondents (median 2) and highest among Asians, particularly Indians (median 4), while the median for other groups, including whites, was 3.

Questions on work values related to the importance of financial rewards, a company's reputation and equal opportunities policy, training and career opportunities, employer's geographical location, and the extent to which the current job suited one's skills and interests. As shown in Figure 3.6, small differences emerged between ethnic minorities and whites in relation to the significance of different work values, with the exception of the importance of an organisation's equal opportunities policy. Sixty-one per cent of ethnic minorities, but only 40 per cent of whites, said this was an important consideration in choosing their current job. We explored the importance of an employer's equal opportunities policy separately for women and men from the two groups. The findings show that while very similar proportions of ethnic minority women (26 per cent) and men (29 per cent) mentioned this as a significant factor, considerable difference emerged between white women and men. Only ten per cent of white men mentioned a company's equal opportunities policy, compared with 30 per cent of white women. Later, in Chapter 4, ethnic minority graduates' perceptions of employers' equal opportunities policies and practices are discussed further, including how these might affect their choice of job.

Figure 3.6: Important factors influencing choice of current job among ethnic minorities and white respondents



Source: IES Survey

Finally, respondents were asked if, and to what extent, they had experienced difficulties in their current job, in relation to different forms of discrimination and lack of job autonomy, poor career and development opportunities. Table 3.12, shows the proportion of respondents who reported having experienced these difficulties to a considerable extent (*ie* 'a great deal' and 'a fair amount'). Ethnic minorities were considerably more likely than whites to report lack of challenging work and proper training, while they were only slightly more likely to report lack of autonomy in their current job.

The number of respondents who reported various forms of discrimination was small, and our conclusions are therefore rather tentative. Sixteen per cent of ethnic minorities had experienced race discrimination to a significant extent. However,

Table 3.12: Ethnicity by difficulties experienced in current employment

Type of difficulty	Ethnic minorities		Whites	
	N	%	N	%
Lack of challenging work	35	32	26	23
Lack of proper training	29	27	22	19
Lack of autonomy	28	26	26	23
Race discrimination	18	16	3	3
Age discrimination	14	13	6	5
Sex discrimination	10	9	8	7

All the associations were not statistically significant with the exception of race discrimination.

** Percentages were calculated out of the respective total number of respondents from ethnic minority and white groups who answered 'a great deal' or 'a fair amount' to these questions.*

Source: IES Survey

a further 28 per cent had experienced race discrimination, but to a smaller extent (*ie* 'a little' or 'not very much'). In total, 42 per cent of ethnic minorities had experienced race discrimination in their current job, albeit at different levels of intensity.

Some interesting variations emerged between different ethnic minority groups, the proportion of black respondents reporting racial discrimination being double that of Asians (66 compared with 33 per cent).

Although age was controlled for in the sample matching process, a considerably higher proportion of ethnic minorities than whites mentioned age discrimination, though actual numbers were very small. Finally, there was little difference in the proportion of ethnic minority and white graduates reporting sex discrimination.

The issue of discrimination in employment is rather complex and cannot be fully explored in a structured questionnaire. Later on, in Chapter 4, we present some of the interview findings which highlight the different forms of discrimination experienced by ethnic minorities, and how these affected their careers.

To summarise, some of the findings on job quality and work values seem to indicate that ethnic minority graduates faced greater difficulties in employment and had less rewarding experiences than their white counterparts. They were more likely to feel under-employed, and less likely to have been promoted. They were also more likely to report lack of challenging work and autonomy, and limited training opportunities. Nearly half of ethnic minorities had experienced racial discrimination in their current job, though mostly to a limited extent, and more ethnic minorities had experienced age discrimination than whites. However, other findings were less conclusive. On the whole, few differences emerged in relation to graduate level employment and most work values. Finally, some of the results also highlight variations between different ethnic minority groups, with black respondents feeling more negative about their promotion prospects, being less likely to report they were in a graduate level job, and more likely to have experienced racial discrimination in their current post than other ethnic minority graduates.

3.5 Unemployment

As shown earlier (Table 3.2), at every career stage included in the questionnaire, ethnic minority graduates were more likely to have been unemployed than their white peers, although these differences were rather small. For example, six months after graduation, 18 per cent of ethnic minority and 15 per cent of white graduates were unemployed. At the time of the survey, the gap between the proportions of unemployed respondents from the two groups was identical, the respective figures were ten and seven per cent.

Table 3.13: Ethnicity by number of times respondents had been unemployed

Number of times in unemployment	Ethnic minorities		Whites	
	N	%	N	%
Once	25	52	33	69
Twice	12	25	12	25
Three times or more	11	23	3	6
Total	*48*		*48*	

Source: IES Survey

Table 3.14: Ethnicity by type of factors inhibiting the search for a job

	Ethnic minorities		Whites	
Type of factor*	N	%	N	%
Labour market	31	34	28	41
Education/skills	37	40	20	30
Non-work factors	7	8	10	15
Discrimination	9	10	1	2
Other	8	9	9	13
Total	92		68	

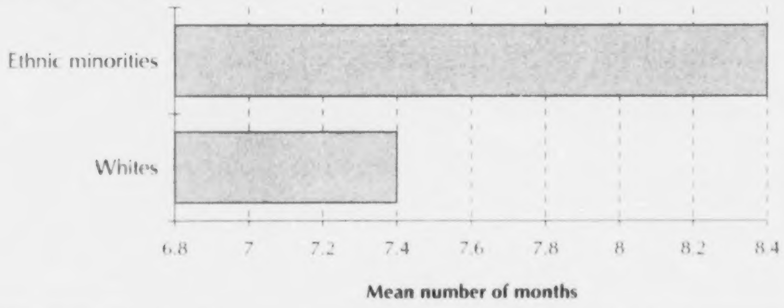
These factors were not listed in the questionnaire; they were included by respondents in an open ended question and subsequently coded. Respondents could mention more than one factor.

Source: IES Survey

Ethnic minorities were more likely to have been unemployed for three times or more since graduation (Table 3.13). In addition, the findings on the length of the longest period of unemployment (Figure 3.7) show that for ethnic minorities this was longer than for whites; the respective mean number of months are 8.4 and 7.4.

In an open ended question, respondents were asked about the factors which had hindered them in their search for a suitable job; their responses were classified as indicated in Table 3.14. Ethnic minorities were considerably more likely to mention lack of suitable educational qualifications and skills (*eg* non-vocational

Figure 3.7: Mean number of months of the longest unemployment period among ethnic minority and white groups



Source: IES Survey

degree, lack of relevant experience), while white graduates were more likely to link their difficulties to labour market factors (*eg* lack of suitable vacancies, very competitive job market). The findings seem to indicate that ethnic minorities were more likely to 'blame themselves' for the failure to secure employment while white graduates were more likely to attribute unemployment to 'external' factors, outside their control. Only nine ethnic minority respondents mentioned racial discrimination as one of the factors impinging on their search for employment. However, these replies were given to an open ended question.

Finally, respondents who were still unemployed at the time of the survey were asked how many jobs they had applied for in the previous six months. The findings show that ethnic minorities had a slightly higher level of job search activity than whites: the mode average number of jobs they had applied for was 4.5 and 4 respectively.[1]

As the quote below from an Indian respondent illustrates, unemployment had a considerable negative influence on respondents' attitudes and expectations.

> *'Being unemployed after graduation was extremely uncomfortable. At times I applied for very basic jobs because queuing on the employment exchange for a giro was a very demoralising experience. I've lost a great deal of confidence and self-esteem.'*

In summary, the findings show that ethnic minorities were only slightly more likely than whites to be unemployed. However, their longer period of unemployment, the greater occurrence of this experience and the tendency to 'blame themselves' could all contribute to make this a much more damaging experience for unemployed ethnic minority graduates, compared with their white peers.

3.6 Further study

In an increasingly competitive graduate labour market where a first degree has become a common currency, a growing number of graduates are looking for ways to enhance their employment opportunities by taking a postgraduate qualification. There is no evidence, in general, that employer demand for post-graduate qualifications is increasing, nevertheless many graduates now believe they need to acquire additional skills and knowledge in order to 'stand out' and thus increase their chances in the labour market. One would expect graduates who have experienced or anticipate experiencing discrimination in employment, to be even more likely to undertake further studies. Additional qualifications could be seen as a way of partly overcoming the actual or perceived labour market disadvantage. As a Pakistani respondent explained:

---

[1] The mode rather than the mean was calculated because the categories included some extreme values.

> *'I feel that I was discriminated against in my early applications. I never even got to the interview stage. I then decided to enhance my employment prospects by doing a teaching course and I have now found a teaching job where I am very happy.'*

A post-graduate qualification could also be seen as partly compensating for a low class of degree, as the Indian respondent quoted below illustrates:

> *'A third class degree is not given much recognition, and when applying for a job there is no opportunity to present a case for why a degree classification may not be a true reflection of your potential . . . . . . I therefore felt that I had no choice but to do a Masters in order to stand a chance to get a suitable job.'*

As discussed in Chapter 5, the survey findings show that ethnic minorities were less likely than their white peers to secure a first or upper second degree. This might represent an additional factor contributing to the decision among ethnic minorities to study further.

Despite these motivating factors, there are hindrances to gaining additional qualifications, such as exclusion from networks which can help to secure funding for post-graduate studies, and low salary levels. As shown earlier, ethnic minorities were earning less than white graduates in general. The interview findings discussed in the next chapter also show that ethnic minorities were likely to be excluded from informal networks and sources of support in both employment and academia.

The survey findings on the likelihood of undertaking further studies present an interesting picture. As indicated in Table 3.15, ethnic minorities were more likely than whites to identify further studies as their main activity in the first 18 months after graduation. At the two year stage, the proportions from the two groups in further studies were equal, while at the time of the

Table 3.15: Ethnicity by respondents in further studies at six monthly intervals

Length of time after graduation	Ethnic minorities		Whites	
	N	%*	N	%*
6 months	25	18	19	14
12 months	24	18	18	13
18 months	22	16	18	13
2 years	18	13	17	13
2.5 years	14	10	16	12

* Percentages were calculated out of the respective total number of respondents from ethnic minority and white groups who answered the questions on employment status at six monthly intervals.

Source: IES Survey

Table 3.16: Ethnicity by type of further studies

Type of course	Ethnic minorities		Whites	
	N	%	N	%
PhD/MPhil, Master, post-grad. diploma	37	63	30	50
Professional qualification	15	25	19	32
Other	7	12	11	18
*Total**	59		60	

**Respondents could mention more than one course*

Source: IES Survey

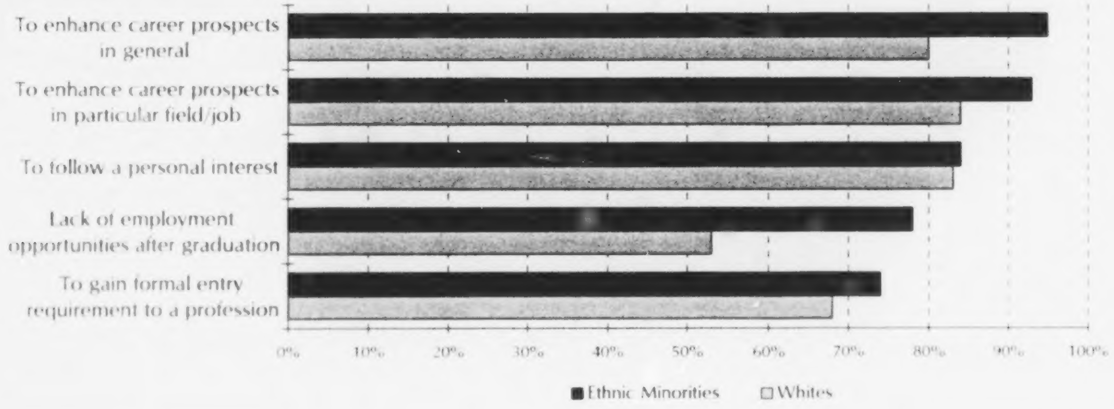
survey a slightly higher proportion of whites than ethnic minorities were found in this category.

The different post-graduation courses mentioned by respondents were grouped into three broad categories, as indicated in Table 3.16. Ethnic minorities were less likely than whites to have undertaken a professional course, but they were more likely to be studying or to have studied for a Master, PhD/MPhil or post-graduate diploma.

There was virtually no difference in terms of mode of study, with 60 per cent of ethnic minorities and 59 per cent of whites having studied on a full-time basis.

Respondents were asked about the importance of different factors in deciding to undertake further studies. The findings presented in Figure 3.8 seem to validate the hypothesis that additional qualifications are seen by ethnic minorities as a way of overcoming labour market disadvantage. A considerably higher proportion of ethnic minority respondents than whites mentioned the need to enhance their career prospects as important in influencing their decision to study further. The percentage

Figure 3.8: Important factors in deciding to undertake further studies among ethnic minorities and white groups



Source: IES Survey

difference was statistically significant. Similarly, a higher proportion of ethnic minorities saw an additional qualification as an important way to improve their career prospects in a specific job or field of employment. More than three-quarters of ethnic minorities also mentioned the lack of employment opportunities after graduation as an important reason for studying, while just over half of whites saw this as important. Again this association was statistically significant.

Ethnic minorities were also more likely than whites to mention the need to gain formal entry to a profession as a reason for studying further, but the difference was not very large. Almost equal proportions of respondents from the two groups mentioned the desire to follow a personal interest as a significant factor.

3.7 Career patterns

We now turn to analysing respondents' career paths in more detail to establish if, and to what extent, variations between ethnic minorities and whites persist in career progress. Whenever possible, variations between different ethnic minority groups are also explored.

3.7.1 Career profiles

One way of exploring career histories is to identify the most common patterns of different labour market states, and restrict the analysis to the most common profiles (see for example Connor and Pollard, 1996). We identified 92 different career profiles, each pattern comprising different combinations of the five possible labour market states at the five points in time (see Table 3.2). The four most common career profiles were:

- permanent employment at each stage since graduation, which accounted for 38 per cent of the sample (*ie* 104 cases)
- short-term employment at the six month stage, then in permanent employment at all the other stages, which accounted for six per cent (*ie* 16 cases)
- unemployed at the six month stage, and then in permanent employment at each subsequent stage, which accounted for five per cent of the sample (*ie* 13 cases)
- in further study at all stages, four per cent of the sample (*ie* 11 cases)

All other combinations included less than ten cases.

Only the first career path mentioned above (*ie* in permanent employment at all stages) had a sufficient number of cases to carry out any meaningful analysis. Thirty-three per cent of ethnic minority graduates had been in permanent employment since graduation, compared with 42 per cent of their white

peers. However, probably due to the small size of the sub-sample, this association was not statistically significant.

As mentioned earlier, the effect of potential confounding variables (*ie* gender, type of university, degree subject and age) had been controlled for at the sampling stage. However, class of degree is becoming increasingly important in a very competitive graduate labour market. As the employers' interviews in Chapter 6 show, a low class of degree (*ie* lower second and below) can have a considerable negative effect on one's career prospects, as a 'good' degree has become an important shortlisting criterion used by employers.

We found that when controlling for class of degree, differences between the two groups virtually disappeared: 47 per cent of ethnic minority graduates with a first or an upper second degree had been in permanent employment since graduation, the corresponding figure for whites was 45 per cent. Again, it should be noted that sample numbers were small and these findings must be interpreted with a certain degree of caution. However, given the potential effect that class of degree can have on employment opportunities, it seems even more important to explore further the association we have identified between degree class, ethnicity, and employment outcomes.

We also looked at different sub-groups of respondents to establish whether differences relating to age and gender persisted within different ethnic groups. We explored the association between permanent employment since graduation and ethnicity separately for women and men. As indicated in Table 3.17, the difference between ethnic minority and white women was larger than that between men from the two groups. While, again, we are dealing with rather small numbers (but the association was statistically significant), this result could support the 'double disadvantage' theory, whereby ethnic minority women face disadvantage in employment on the basis of both gender and race.

We also explored any variations for respondents in different age groups: *ie* 26 and under, versus over 26. Older respondents were more likely to have been in permanent employment all the time. However, within both the younger and older age groups, whites were more likely to have been in permanent employment since

Table 3.17: Ethnicity and gender of respondents who had been in paid employment at all career stages

	Women		**Men**	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**
Ethnic minorities	19	42	30	48
Whites	26	58	32	52
Total	45		62	

Source: IES Survey

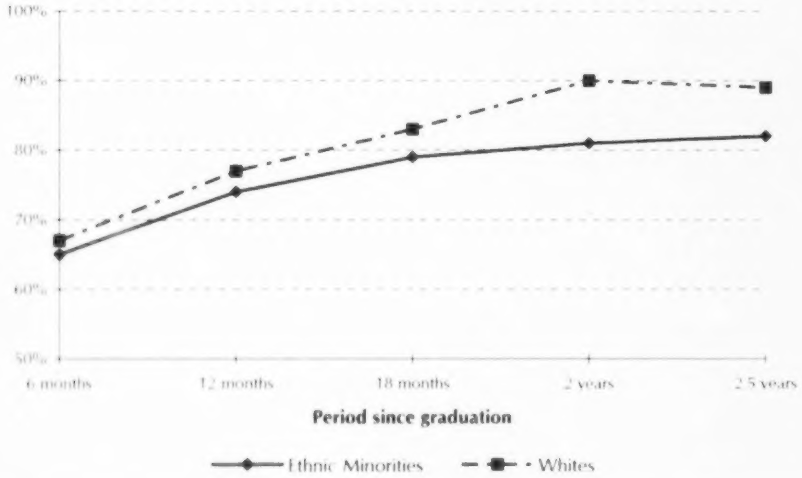
graduation. This difference was particularly marked in the older age group, where 40 per cent of ethnic minorities had been in permanent employment all the time; the corresponding figure for whites was 52 per cent. However, because of the small sample size, the association was not statistically significant.

3.7.2 'Successful' graduates

We also explored differences in the employment status of ethnic minority and white respondents by using the Gregson and Taylor (1987) definition of graduates' 'success' in the labour market. This is defined in terms of permanent employment or further study. This is obviously a rather crude measure of 'success', as it does not take into account factors such job 'quality', level, suitability and salary. However, the analysis of the data using this indicator of labour market success shows some interesting and relatively consistent patterns. As indicated in Figure 3.9, the gap between 'successful' and 'unsuccessful' ethnic minority and white respondents was very small in the first 12 months after graduation (*ie* two per cent at six months, and three per cent a year after graduation). However, this increased considerably over the following year; by June 1995 it went up to nine per cent, and while it narrowed over the next six months, there was still a seven per cent gap at the time of the survey.

Given the small sample size, it was not possible to conduct a detailed analysis of the career patterns of all the different ethnic groups. However, we explored differences between black and Asian respondents, using the measure of 'success' described above.

Figure 3.9: 'Successful' graduates from ethnic minorities and white groups



Source: IES Survey

Table 3.18: Black and Asian respondents by 'success' in the labour market at six monthly intervals

Length of time after graduation	Blacks		Asians	
	N	%*	N	%*
6 months	15	60	55	66
12 months	19	76	60	73
18 months	20	80	66	80
2 years	20	80	70	84
2.5 years	22	88	71	86

* *Percentages were calculated out of the total number of black and Asian respondents who answered this question.*

Source: IES Survey

As shown in Table 3.18, when looking at 'success' for black graduates and Asians separately, no clear pattern emerges. Initially, Asians were more likely than black respondents to have secured permanent employment or to be in further study. However, the situation is reversed a year after graduation. Six months later no difference at all emerged between the two groups. After two years, Asians were more likely to be found in the 'successful' category. But at the time of the survey, a slightly higher proportion of black respondents were in permanent employment or further study.

The analysis presented earlier on respondents' status at six monthly intervals showed some small differences between ethnic minorities and whites, but provided no evidence that the gap between the two groups might widen or narrow over time. The analysis of the employment status data using the Gregson and Taylor (1987) definition of 'successful' graduates, shows more clear and consistent differences between ethnic minorities and whites, particularly two years after graduation. However, as mentioned earlier, this is a rather crude measure of success, and findings on other 'success' measures discussed below show some less clear patterns.

3.7.3 The impact of a 'good start' and further studies

Respondents' career success could also be defined in terms of current permanent employment. Again we realise that this is a rather crude measure of success, nevertheless, it helps to test further some of the findings on variations between ethnic minorities and whites. One might expect the ability to secure a permanent post within six months of graduation to have a positive influence on current employment status. Indeed we found that 75 per cent of respondents who had found a permanent job within six months of graduation, were also in the same employment position at the time of the survey. The corresponding figure for the rest of the sample was 64 per cent. However, our findings show that while initial permanent employment is an advantage for both ethnic minorities and whites, the gap between the two groups identified earlier remained. Seventy-two per cent of ethnic minorities, but 77 per cent of whites, who had secured a permanent job six months after graduation, were still in the same employment position at the time of the survey.

Similarly, one would expect further studies to constitute an advantage in terms of current employment status. Our findings show that 84 per cent of the respondents who had undertaken a course leading to a qualification, were now in permanent employment. However, again, while this was an advantage for both ethnic minority and white groups, the latter seemed to benefit more. Eighty-two per cent of ethnic minorities and 86 per cent of whites who had undertaken further studies, were in permanent employment at the time of the survey.

3.7.4 Career 'turbulence'

We also explored respondents' career paths by analysing the number of changes in employment status for each respondent. This analysis provided a measure of career changeability or career 'turbulence'. The number of career states were grouped into three categories which included: employment, further studies and not in employment (*ie* unemployed or not available for employment). The findings in Table 3.19 show that ethnic minorities experienced a higher level of career turbulence than whites. The former were more likely than the latter to have changed employment status in the two and a half years since graduation. However, it must be emphasised that some of the differences were very small, and the association was not statistically significant.

The experience of the black respondent reported below gives an idea of the instability faced by graduates who entered the labour market.

> *I believe many graduates have similar experiences to my own: I first got a temporary job, this was a good way to gain work experience, but it made me feel very financially insecure. I also had to do some voluntary work in order to get some additional experience, but again money was a problem. I then grabbed the first permanent job that*

Table 3.19: Respondents' number of career status changes, by ethnicity

Career status changes	Ethnic minorities		Whites	
	N	%	N	%
No changes	74	54	79	58
One change	36	27	37	27
Two or more changes	26	19	20	15
Total	*136*		*136*	

Source: IES Survey

Table 3.20: Respondents' career satisfaction, by ethnicity

Career satisfaction	Ethnic minorities		Whites	
	N	%	N	%
Satisfied	64	57	75	65
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	20	18	18	16
Dissatisfied	29	26	22	19
Total	*113*		*115*	

Source: IES Survey

> *came along because I needed the money, and then discovered it was well below my abilities and potential. I am now looking for another job.'*

3.7.5 Career satisfaction

Finally, respondents were asked to what extent they were satisfied with their post-graduation career so far. As shown in Table 3.20, white respondents reported a higher level of career satisfaction than ethnic minorities.

The level of career satisfaction varied considerably between different ethnic groups. At one extreme we find Indians, whose level of career satisfaction was higher than for whites: 74 per cent said they were satisfied with their career to date. At the other extreme, there were black respondents: only 36 per cent reported satisfaction with their post-graduation career. The higher level of satisfaction among Indians and whites could partly be related to earlier findings on graduate level employment and promotion prospects. White and Indian respondents were more likely to regard their current job as graduate level employment, they had higher current salaries, and had higher expectations about their promotion prospects. On the other hand, the findings on under-employment and the experience of race discrimination in the workplace, could explain the low level of satisfaction among black graduates. These results seem to support some of the findings from other studies (*eg* Jones, 1993) which have shown that this group is likely to face greater disadvantage in the labour market.

3.8 Conclusion

The survey findings on respondents' career patterns seem to confirm some of the earlier research about the disadvantage faced by ethnic minorities in the labour market, including those with a degree. At every post-graduation career stage, ethnic minority graduates were less likely to be in permanent employment and slightly more likely to be unemployed than their white peers. In addition, the longest period of unemployment was longer for ethnic minorities than whites, and they were also likely to have been unemployed for a greater number of times.

Ethnic minorities were less likely than white graduates to have been in permanent employment since graduation. Using the Gregson and Taylor (1987) measure of graduate 'success', we found not only that ethnic minorities were less likely than whites to be 'successful', but also that the gap between the two groups widened in the first two years. While this narrowed over the following six months, it was still seven per cent at the time of the survey. Looking at factors which might have a positive influence on the likelihood of being in permanent employment (*ie* initial permanent employment and further study), we found that while these seemed to have positive influence on both ethnic minority and white graduates, the latter seemed to benefit more from these additional advantages.

The findings on first job after graduation, and permanent employment, present a more mixed picture. Some of the findings seem to confirm the results on career patterns, which indicate that ethnic minorities faced greater difficulties in the labour market. For example, compared with their white peers, they had to apply for a greater number of jobs, and it took them longer to secure their first post. In their current job they were earning less, they were more likely to feel under-employed, and experienced greater difficulties. They were also less likely to have been promoted and to be satisfied with their career so far. However, some of the findings also show little or no differences between ethnic minority and white graduates. For example, there were no variations in relation to the likelihood of being in 'non-standard employment'. No significant differences emerged in relation to employer's size and sector. Similarly, the findings on the extent to which respondents regarded their job as graduate level employment are not conclusive, with a very small difference between the mean scores measuring the level of one's job. It is interesting to note that ethnic minorities were more likely to hold a professional job, and this was the case for both their first post, as well as their current one. Initial salaries of ethnic minorities were also higher than those of whites, however, the situation was reversed by the time of the survey.

Variations between different ethnic groups could be explored only to a limited extent, because of the small number of cases in some of the sub-groups. Some of the findings seem to confirm previous research (*eg* Jones, 1993) which has shown that some ethnic minority groups face greater disadvantage, while the situation for other highly qualified ethnic minority graduates is very similar to that of whites. For example, we found evidence to suggest that black graduates experienced greater disadvantage in the labour market compared with other ethnic minorities, as shown by the findings on salary level, career satisfaction, racial discrimination, promotion prospects and under-employment. We also found that the employment situation of Indians was in many ways similar to that of whites, as indicated by the findings on graduate level job and promotion prospects. However, not all the results highlight these differences. While these variations merit being explored further, we do not have conclusive evidence to suggest that any clear patterns are emerging.

The impact of class of degree has emerged as an important issue, as it seemed to have a considerable influence on respondents' careers. This was shown by the findings relating to respondents who had been in permanent employment since graduation, and by the length of time it took them to secure the first job. When we controlled for class of degree, in the first case, the difference between ethnic minorities and whites virtually disappeared, while in the second case, it was considerably reduced. Given that our survey results, presented in Chapter 5, show that ethnic minorities were more likely to get a lower class of degree than their white peers, the question of why ethnic minorities seem to be achieving lower academic results is an issue worthy of further investigation.

4. Invisible Barriers, Real Discrimination

This chapter follows on from the previous one to give greater insight into ethnic minority graduates' experiences in the labour market. It draws mainly from the in depth-interviews conducted with a sub-sample of 25 survey respondents from different ethnic minority groups. These follow-up interviews explored in greater depth their education and employment histories, and the main influences on their career development.

The main themes which guided this qualitative stage of the study included:

- the extent to which the main influences on respondents' career development differ from the 'traditional' factors impinging on graduates' early careers, *eg* socio-economic background, type of school/university attended
- respondents' perceptions of the main structural constraints and the extent to which these are specifically linked to ethnicity or to other variables, *eg* gender, age, family circumstances
- the extent to which discrimination and the anticipation of discrimination might have influenced their career choices and moves
- the role of career guidance and the main sources of encouragement and support, and in particular what coping strategies and sources of external support can lead to positive outcomes.

Some of these themes had emerged in the research literature review (see Chapter 2).

First, some examples of career profiles of interviewees are presented in order to illustrate the variety of careers and experiences of individuals.

4.1 Career profiles

4.1.1 Adenike

Adenike, 28, African, BA in Psychology, IIii.

Adenike went to a comprehensive school where she and her sister were the only black children. This was a very negative experience, which considerably impinged on her academic performance. As she explained:

> *'We were the only black children in the school and we stood out, it felt horrible, we wanted to blend in but we couldn't. The other children used racist language and the teachers wouldn't challenge it, they'd say it was just a joke.'*

Adenike felt that career teachers never really listened to what she wanted to do, and their advice was based mainly on their stereotypical views of black people. This meant that the career options offered to her were very narrow (*eg* nursing, work with the elderly) and she was never encouraged to carry on studying. She was advised to do a BTEC rather than 'A' levels. Adenike then worked for a few years in clerical and secretarial jobs, but she found these boring and unchallenging, and decided to go back to full-time education. She went to do a psychology degree at a former polytechnic in London. At university, Adenike felt unsupported and had a very difficult time. As a mature student she was initially told that she would receive additional help and support, but these never materialised. In addition, there were a few lecturers who were well known for their racist attitudes, but their behaviour was never challenged, and it was just something black students had to put up with. While at university, Adenike took part in the mentoring scheme and she felt this had a very positive influence on her subsequent career. Her mentor helped her to explore different career options, gave her invaluable career advice and guidance, and put her in touch with other black professionals.

By the time of graduation Adenike had decided to pursue a career in forensic psychology. She was aware that this was a very competitive field, and that she would have to work hard to succeed. She took a temporary job soon after completing her course. She then got her current post as care worker in a hostel for people with mental health problems. She has applied for a few jobs in her chosen field, but without success so far. Currently she is taking a diploma in criminal psychology and also teaching part-time in a prison. She hoped that the additional qualification and the prison work experience would enhance her prospects of securing a forensic psychology post.

4.1.2 Roy

Roy, 25, African-Caribbean, BSc in Business and Management, IIi.

Roy went to a comprehensive school which was very mixed in terms of ethnic composition. He was very ambitious and had always wanted to go to university. By the time he did his 'A' levels he had already decided he wanted a business career. His parents always encouraged him to study, valuing education and seeing it as a way of avoiding some of the job disadvantages they had suffered. Some of his teachers were also very supportive, as Roy explained:

> *'Three of my teachers gave me inspiration and encouragement . . . . I knew what I wanted to do in life and they gave me options about what to do next and how to achieve it.'*

Roy went to an 'old' university in the North of England. Overall his experience of higher education was positive, and the difficulties he faced were not related to racial discrimination, as he put it:

> *'Lecturers were helpful if you could find them! There were lots of doctors at home writing papers but you could book appointments, they had time for us, for all students . . . . The Careers Office provided all you could possibly need.'*

After completing his degree, Roy travelled around Europe for a few months, had two temporary jobs, and was now working as an accountant trainee in London. Roy was not very satisfied with his career progress so far. It took him longer than he had anticipated to secure a permanent post. But more importantly, he felt that his current job did not provide enough development opportunities:

> *'I'm not getting the experience I need so I'm looking for a new job. I need a proper graduate scheme to get the necessary experience to pass my exams. There are no development opportunities. They just took twelve graduates for accounting roles, but they weren't originally graduate jobs . . . . I graduated in 1993 and by now I should have made more progress. Most other people on my course have been promoted and are in good jobs, I don't know why not me.'*

4.1.3 Nilesh

Nilesh, 23, Indian, BSc in Chemistry and Chemical Technology, III.

Nilesh went to a white dominated school where initially he was the only ethnic minority pupil. The school was very academically oriented and, he felt, provided a 'good start'. He always saw higher education as a 'natural progression'. The school's encouragement was reinforced by the family who expected him to do well at school and go to university. For his parents, this was seen as a way to give him a better future than they had enjoyed.

Nilesh went to an established university in the North of England. He did not suffer any direct discrimination while at university, however, during this time he became acutely aware of racial discrimination in employment, as he explained:

> *'I realised that a black person has to work twice as hard to achieve the same goals as a white person.'*

However, he found that lecturers and career advisers were unwilling to talk about racial discrimination, they even found it difficult to recognise that such fears were real for ethnic minority students.

A low class of degree and the lack of employment opportunities in his field (*ie* chemistry) strongly influenced Nilesh's early career decisions. Soon after graduation his main preoccupation was to find a job and avoid unemployment, rather than pursue a specific career. He had two temporary clerical posts, before securing his current job with a financial company. Initially, the job was offered to him on a temporary basis, and involved mainly clerical work. However, he had the opportunity to work at the 'front desk' dealing with clients' queries, and was then offered a permanent position as Customer Services Executive. He also had the opportunity to get involved in analysing financial information and writing a computer program for the analysis. Because of this experience, he decided to pursue a career in finance as an investment analyst. He had already obtained a Financial Planning Certificate and was currently studying for the Investment Management Certificate.

Despite the difficult start, Nilesh was positive about his future career prospects. He saw himself in a Trading Fund Manager position in five years time, and in an Investment Manager post in the longer term. He thought that he would fulfil his ambitions if he continued to work hard. On the whole he did not feel that racial discrimination had had a significant influence on his career so far, and did not think this was likely to be a problem in the future. Notwithstanding this optimism, he did anticipate some barriers, as he put it:

> *'The City is about who you know, and not what you know. This is the real barrier in the future.'*

4.1.4 Rakhi

Rakhi, 25, Pakistani, BA in Social Sciences, IIii.

Rakhi went to a comprehensive school. While she always wanted to go to university, she was not sure whether her family would allow her to do so. She went to a 'new' university in the Midlands. Her choice of institution was largely determined by geographical location. While her family had reluctantly agreed to allow her to go to university, they would have never allowed her to study away from home. At university, Rakhi found it difficult to settle, particularly in her first year. She was the only Asian student on the course, and her lifestyle was considerably different from that of her (white) peers. For example, as a Muslim she was not allowed to drink alcohol, and as a Pakistani woman the amount of time she could spend outside the home was limited. In addition, she felt that (white) lecturers and counsellors did not understand nor acknowledge cultural and ethnic diversity. Because of this, she was very reluctant to talk about any family problems with university staff, even when these were affecting her academic performance. All these factors contributed to the sense of isolation and marginalisation she experienced during this period.

After completing her degree, she felt that the constraints on her geographical mobility considerably limited her career options. She wanted to work in the financial sector, but most of the jobs in this field required people to be geographically mobile, at least initially. She applied for several jobs in finance in the local area, but without any success. She then worked on a voluntary basis as a youth worker in a community centre for Asian women for a few months. Because of this experience she was able to secure her current job as Asian worker with the Citizens Advisory Bureau. Rakhi was very happy in her current job, and was considering the possibility of qualifying as a civil rights lawyer. Her workplace was very mixed in terms of ethnicity, but she felt that in many other places diversity was not recognised and valued, and black people 'didn't fit in.'

4.2 Discrimination in employment

The findings from the survey and follow-up interviews showed clearly that discrimination in employment was still perceived as a problem by some ethnic minority graduates. While blatant forms of discrimination were rare, more subtle forms of discrimination and exclusion still persisted, and could limit ethnic minority graduates' career opportunities. As one respondent who worked for the ethnic minority mentoring unit of a university explained:

> *'Ethnic minority graduates face a brick wall when they enter the labour market. Racial discrimination has become very subtle but it's still pervasive. Discrimination has gone underground and because of that it's difficult to identify and challenge it.'*

In the interviews, many examples were reported by ethnic minority graduates of difficulties in obtaining practice placements, of white job applicants with lower qualifications (*eg* 'A' levels) obtaining jobs for which they had not even been shortlisted, and feelings of being denied development opportunities available to other white colleagues.

The anticipation of discrimination could also limit ethnic minority graduates' perceptions of 'feasible' career options. As discussed in the next chapter, some of the ethnic minority graduates interviewed were rather reluctant to enter professions where black people and Asians are 'invisible', partly because of the perceived difficulties of having to operate in predominantly white professions.

The extent to which the anticipation of discrimination affected respondents' career choices and moves after graduation varied considerably. Some respondents believed public sector employers to be generally 'more advanced' in terms of equal opportunities policies and practices. In particular, respondents thought that in the public sector, equal opportunities initiatives had been more 'visible' and had sent some clear messages. In addition, more efforts had been made to change organisational cultures, and to ensure that the values of employees from different groups (including ethnic minorities) were recognised and accepted. Probably because of these efforts, ethnic minorities were believed to be better represented in the public sector. Similarly, some of the larger and more prestigious private sector employers were also perceived as being more aware of the need to deal with discrimination at work. However, in the current economic climate, respondents felt they could not exclude potential employers on the basis of their equal opportunities record. While respondents had some clear views and preferences in relation to the type of employer they would prefer to work for, economic circumstances seriously limited their choice.

Another important issue emerging from the interviews was the extent to which a number of inter-related factors, such as coming from a former polytechnic, having a low class of degree, being a mature student, and the perceived lack of suitable employment opportunities, had a significant impact on long-term career aspirations and expectations. However, perceptions of racial discrimination also contributed to undermining graduates' confidence and career aspirations. There were examples of respondents who at the beginning of their graduate career were confident, enthusiastic and very career orientated. However, they became very demoralised and disillusioned after struggling for two and a half years in a very competitive graduate labour market, where many felt they faced racial discrimination, in addition to other forms of disadvantage. Their confidence had been seriously undermined and their main priority was to find just 'any job', partly in order to repay their student loan. The views expressed by the Asian graduate quoted below reflected the feelings of a number of respondents:

> *'It will be a miracle if I achieve my ambition [ie to become a lawyer] and the main barrier is discrimination. If someone had told me this six years ago I wouldn't have believed them, but now I have experienced discrimination directly and I know what the real world out there is like.'*

As mentioned earlier, blatant forms of discrimination in employment are now rare. However, in recent years numerous studies on different aspects of discrimination have highlighted more subtle forms of exclusion and disadvantage. Some of these also emerged from our research and are discussed further below.

4.3 Organisational cultures and the acceptance of diversity

In recent years, there has been a growing understanding and recognition of the extent to which organisational cultures can contribute to exclusion and discrimination, despite the existence of equal opportunities policies and procedures. Organisational culture is usually defined in terms of shared symbols, language, practices ('how we do things around here'), and deeply embedded beliefs and values. Organisational culture has become a salient issue in the study of discrimination, not only because it can represent a serious barrier to change, but because such a barrier is 'slippery' and elusive. It is part of the taken-for- granted, everyday reality and it is therefore hard to see and challenge.

This 'invisible' barrier was clearly perceived by a number of respondents who had often felt that they 'didn't fit in' in some workplaces. However, the mechanisms which led to this exclusion and marginalisation were not immediately obvious, and therefore more difficult to deal with. As with their experiences at universities discussed in the next chapter, the absence of signs and images reflecting the acceptance of cultural and ethnic diversity could make respondents feel very uncomfortable or even marginalised. This was particularly problematic for graduates who wanted to maintain their cultural identity. For example, some respondents felt that in order to 'fit in' they would have to wear 'western clothes', speak with an English accent and more generally 'act English'. There were also examples of graduates who either changed their name into an English one in job application forms, or considered doing so, as they believed that an Asian or African name could constitute a disadvantage. In one of the Careers Services we visited, staff advised Asian students not to print their name in bold at the top of their CV!

There were numerous other examples which illustrate the extent to which respondents felt their cultural and ethnic background could constitute a barrier in some workplaces. 'Fear of diversity' was mentioned by a number of people, as the respondent quoted below explained:

> *'. . . it takes a lot for firms to consider employing people from ethnic minorities. If you are good enough, you might get a job, but it's not easy. Personality is so important and whether the person interviewing you is comfortable with black people, some aren't.'*

The lack of shared values and experiences, and the refusal to recognise and deal with these differences in constructive ways, were also important issues which emerged from the interviews. The graduate quoted below talks about her contrasting experiences of working in two very different schools:

> *'I taught in a grammar school for a few months, I felt very uncomfortable because I wasn't able to be myself. It was a very white dominated culture, and there were many signs that told me that I didn't really belong there, the dress code, the topics of conversation. They had very rigid attitudes and they were not prepared to accept anything new . . . . At the beginning I used to sit in the middle of the staff room and tried to talk to everybody, but I slowly moved to a corner and just minded my own business . . . . In another school I worked, the culture was very open, there was an emphasis on multi-culturalism, new ideas were encouraged, there was great variety in terms of the children's ethnic background . . . at first I didn't even notice that I was the only Asian teacher.'*

Some respondents also felt that employers' expectations that graduates should have been involved with extra-curricular activities related exclusively to participation in typically 'white' activities, *eg* a cricket or rugby club. Neither employers nor career advisers had ever given them any indication that religious and other activities within their own community would be considered valuable and relevant. Indeed, a piece of advice that graduate careers adviser gave to ethnic minority students was not to mention in their job applications any involvement they might have had with the University's Islamic Society.

Finally, exclusion from informal networks was perceived as another form of disadvantage. Success and progress within organisations was sometimes felt to depend on access to informal clubs and networks where *'the 'real' business goes on'*. They could also provide access to information, advice, support and mentors to help improve career opportunities and success within an organisation. Some respondents had had access to these networks, by being 'in the right place at the right time'. Others had benefited from more formalised sources of support outside as well as inside organisations (*eg* British Caribbean Chamber of Commerce, or a mentoring scheme within an organisation). However, in many cases respondents felt excluded from these networks and clubs. They tended to be seen as inaccessible, or accessible only to those sharing narrowly defined cultural values and beliefs — *eg 'white boys' networks'*.

4.4 Tokenism: 'we've got two of those'

In recent years a combination of economic and social changes have pushed discrimination and equal opportunities high up the political agenda. However, despite some improvements in the employment situation of traditionally disadvantaged groups (including ethnic minorities), some people would argue that 'real equality' is still a distant prospect. This feeling was shared by many of the graduates who took part in the interviews, some of whom were very frustrated at employers' unwillingness to go beyond 'token gestures'. Some believed that despite the rhetoric, many employers are not genuinely committed to equal opportunities, and that tokenism could be used to deny, once again, the existence and reality of racial discrimination in employment. Some felt that now that ethnic minorities are not totally absent from some sectors of the economy and from more prestigious occupations, and are no longer overwhelmingly disadvantaged, the 'scandal effect' has disappeared, and the issue of racial discrimination can be more easily avoided. As one respondent explained:

> *'They [employers] give different reasons for having a question on ethnic origin, but sometimes I wonder whether they say: "Right, how many blacks do we need? Let's say two: one porter and let's put one at the reception so people who walk in see their faces first and think we are an equal opportunity employer" . . . . I don't know, maybe it's a*

> *blessing in disguise, but it seems to me that employers might take on a few black people because nowadays they have to do so, but they are put in lower positions, they are not given the training, the opportunity to develop.'*

Another respondent talked about the humiliating experience of having to go through what he thought were 'token job interviews'. He believed that some employers shortlisted some ethnic minority graduates to 'fill their quotas', but did not seem to be prepared to give them a fair chance, as he explained:

> *'I've had a few of these token interviews during the milkround, it was quite obvious that they were not interested in what I had to say, they wouldn't even look at me and did not give any signs that they were prepared to listen to what I had to say. They were very painful and humiliating experiences.'*

4.5 Conclusion

The follow-up interviews provided greater insight into the range of employment experiences of ethnic minority graduates and the type of difficulties some of them faced in the labour market. Both the survey and interview findings show that discrimination in employment was perceived as a problem by some ethnic minority graduates. However, the exploration of these difficulties, and the more positive experiences some of the respondents had, indicated where employers could make improvements to ensure workplaces are accessible and open to all graduates, regardless of their ethnic origin. The main messages for employers which emerged from the interviews were:

- An equal opportunities policy is essential but should only be seen as a starting point, a means to an end, not an end in itself.
- The equal opportunities debate up to now has been rather negative (*ie* what ethnic minorities cannot do). The discussion should now focus on what ethnic minorities can achieve.
- Selection and recruitment methods should be reviewed to avoid the type of indirect discrimination highlighted earlier on.
- Employers should learn to accept and value cultural and ethnic diversity.
- There is a need to look seriously at how organisational cultures might contribute to the persistence of discrimination. As one respondent put it:

  > *'Changes in procedures and practices are important but ultimately changing the heart is what matters most.'*

Before moving on to the employer perspective (Chapter 6), we briefly focus in the next chapter on some issues related to experiences at and before coming to university which also may have impinged on their early post-graduation career.

5. Graduates and Higher Education

In this chapter we present research findings on respondents' experiences before they entered university, and their entry routes. These are based on the survey of graduates (matched sample of 272 graduates, see section 3.1) and the 25 follow-up interviews (see introduction to Chapter 4).

It explores the main factors which influenced their progress into higher education, their experiences while at university, and how these might have impinged on their early post-graduation career.

5.1 Educational background and work experiences

In both the survey and the follow-up interviews, we asked respondents for details of their experiences prior to entering higher education. It was felt important to understand what factors impinged on the decision by respondents to enter higher education, on their choice of degree and university, and establish how their previous experiences might have influenced their future, post-graduation career.

5.1.1 Entry qualifications

As discussed in Chapter 2, previous studies have highlighted some consistent differences between ethnic groups in terms of entry qualifications (*eg* Modood, 1992; Taylor, 1992). While some differences emerged from the survey, these were not as significant and conclusive as the findings from previous research. However, the low variability in terms of entry qualifications was probably largely due to the fact that, in selecting the sample, we controlled for type of institution ('old and 'new' universities) which some of the previous research has not done.

Very similar proportions of ethnic minority and white respondents had standard entry qualifications (*ie* two or more 'A' levels): the respective figures were 70 and 73 per cent. Similarly, there was very little difference in the 'A' level mean scores for the two groups: this was 17.4 for ethnic minorities and 17.5 for whites.

However, as indicated in Table 5.1, these similarities seem to mask variations between different ethnic minority groups. Black graduates had lower entry qualifications than all the other respondents. Despite the small number of cases in the 'black'

Table 5.1: Respondents' entry qualifications

Standard entrant	Blacks		Asians		Mixed/others		Whites	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	9	36	62	76	23	82	97	73
No	16	64	20	24	5	18	36	27
Total	*25*		*82*		*28*		*133*	

Source: IES Survey

category the difference was statistically significant. Similarly, the mean 'A' level score was considerably lower for black respondents (9.3) compared with the rest of the sample.

5.1.2 Work experience

Work experience before entering higher education was another issue explored by the survey. This is becoming an important influence on graduates' careers, as many employers now expect new recruits to have had some work experience. The analysis shows no difference between ethnic minority and white graduates, with 85 per cent of both groups reporting some pre-degree work experience. However, again variations between different groups emerged: while the proportion of respondents of mixed ethnic origin, Indian and Chinese was just below the average for the sample as a whole, 94 per cent of 'other Asians' had had some work experience.

Differences also emerged in terms of length of work experience, black graduates being more likely to have had more than one year of work experience. Seventy-six per cent of black respondents had worked for more than a year, compared with 44 per cent of whites, and about a third of respondents from the other groups. (*Nb*, these differences were statistically significant.)

5.2 Entering higher education

In this section we explore the influences on the decision by graduates to enter higher education, their choice of degree and university. First, we present the findings from the interviews, and then we report some of the survey results.

5.2.1 Main influences on decision to enter higher educatio

From the interviews it emerged quite clearly that the 'traditional' factors, mentioned in Chapter 2, impinged on the decision by ethnic minorities to enter higher education. Family expectations and values, traditional patterns of aspirations within one's social class or community, role models within one's family and community, were all very important influences. These seemed to lead to a strong career orientation and career focus at an early stage, as the quotes below illustrate:

> *'He [father] helped a lot by instilling drive and ambition; my parents pushed me more than my friends' parents.'*
>
> *'You were expected to go to university, there was no excuse not to go into Higher Education; everybody [within own community] struggles to make their children highly educated.'*
>
> *'I come from a family of seven, my five sisters have all trained to become accountants, and my brother is a doctor, so I had no choice, I had to do something.'*
>
> *'Right from a very early age I've always been a talker, I love talking and I decided that I wanted to be a lawyer.'*

As would be expected, family expectations and support exerted a stronger positive influence on ethnic minority students from a middle or upper class background. However, there was considerable evidence to suggest that education is becoming increasingly important among black and Asian working class families. A 'good education' was seen as necessary to overcome the labour market disadvantage experienced by the parents. As the respondents quoted below explained:

> *'He [father] wanted me to avoid what he went through and appreciated the value of education.'*
>
> *'The Asian community is now exerting more pressure on their children to get a better education . . . . Education is now considered a necessity for second generation Asian children.'*

There were examples of families who were not very supportive, but this seemed largely related to expectations about the role of women in some communities. However, as the respondents quoted below illustrate, this tended to lead to 'confusion' in communities where values were rapidly changing, rather than hostility and obstruction:

> *'I was very confused because I wanted to study. My family did not stop me, but they were not encouraging me either, and my aspirations didn't fit in with my own community's expectations of what a girl should do.'*
>
> *'My family was not very supportive, mainly because of traditional cultural values; a Pakistani woman is not expected to have a career. However, they did not prevent me from going to university.'*

The evidence from the interviews with ethnic minority graduates suggests that 'traditional' views about the role of education, and gender roles, are changing rapidly, and that higher education is increasingly likely to be seen as an 'acceptable' option for young women. As a Pakistani woman talking about her early career ambitions explained:

> *'I wasn't sure what I wanted to do, I knew I wanted to have a career, be "someone". I didn't want to be just someone's daughter or wife for the rest of my life.'*

School and career advice also played a significant role in influencing the decision by respondents to enter higher education. Respondents who had attended academically oriented schools were expected to go to university. The school's ethos, peer pressure and teachers' expectations provided strong push factors and 'a good start'. However, the research also confirms other studies discussed earlier (*eg* Bird *et al.*, 1992; Tomlinson, 1987; Wrench, 1993), that teachers' and career advisers' prejudices and stereotypical views can contribute to limiting ethnic minorities' perception of 'feasible' career options. As some respondents explained:

> *'My teachers' expectations of black students were very stereotypical. I was never encouraged to consider a range of options; teachers only encouraged "certain types of people". I was only presented with two possibilities: work with the elderly and nursing.'*
>
> *'At the time [15 years ago] I was one of the few Asian girls in the school and the teachers didn't know what to do with me. They expected me to leave school early to get married and have children . . . . They just didn't know what to do with an Asian girl who wanted to carry on studying, because I didn't fit their stereotypes.'*

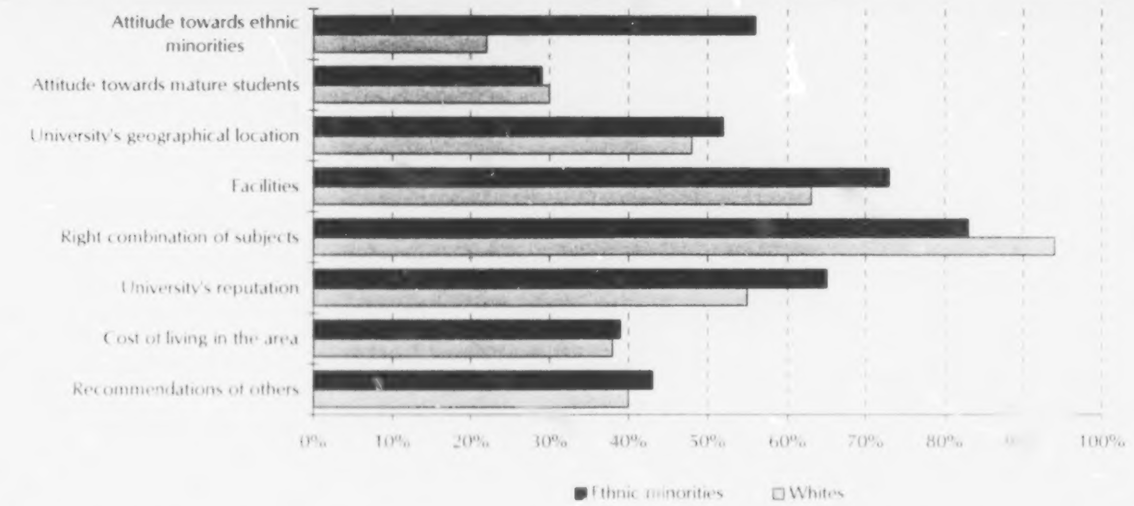
Respondents' experiences at school, and the extent to which these influenced their decision to carry on studying, varied considerably and depended on a variety of factors. For example, it was noticeable that the younger interviewees were more likely to have attended more 'mixed' schools in terms of ethnic composition, and where teachers were viewed as more likely to have a better understanding of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Geographical location could also be important; respondents in predominantly white areas were more likely to have felt isolated and marginalised at school. How well 'integrated' a respondent was perceived to be, was also another important influence impinging on teachers' expectations.

Finally, the visibility of ethnic minorities in some professions, and the presence of role models, emerged as another important influence, not so much on the decision to go to university, but on the choice of degree. Respondents seemed very reluctant to enter professions such as architecture and surveying, where there were very few ethnic minorities. This was partly because in these professions, qualification depends largely on practical training, and there was a belief that ethnic minorities find it more difficult to secure placements, as these are obtained mainly through networks from which ethnic minorities are, by and large, excluded.

5.2.2 Choosing a university

In the survey we asked respondents how important different factors had been on their choice of university. As might be expected, a majority of ethnic minority respondents considered a university's attitude towards students from ethnic groups ar

Figure 5.1: Factors influencing choice of university



Note: Percentages were calculated out of total number of respondents from the ethnic minority and white groups who answered this question.

Source: IES Survey

important factor in choosing where to do their degree (see Figure 5.1). This was not an important consideration for most white graduates, and only a minority mentioned it.

There were no significant differences between ethnic minorities and whites in relation to the importance of a university's attitude towards mature students. However, this was regarded as important by a greater proportion of black respondents, nearly half mentioning it, compared with under a third of the sample as a whole.

A slightly higher proportion of ethnic minority than white graduates said that a university's geographical location was important. This factor seemed to be particularly significant for black graduates, as 72 per cent mentioned it.

There were also differences in terms of the importance the facilities offered by the university were for different groups: 73 per cent of ethnic minority respondents regarded these as important when choosing a university, compared with 63 per cent of whites. Asians seemed to regard facilities as particularly important, as 78 per cent were found in this category. The association was rather weak, but statistically significant.

A university which offered the right combination of subjects seemed more important for white students: 94 per cent mentioned it, compared with 83 per cent of ethnic minorities. On the other hand, an institution's reputation was more likely to be mentioned as significant by ethnic minority students. Asians in particular seemed to regard this as important, with 75 per cent of them mentioning it.

No significant differences emerged in relation to the cost of living in the area where the university was based, with over a third of respondents from all the different ethnic groups regarding this as an important factor. Similarly, no significant differences emerged in the extent to which the recommendations of others influenced the choice of university.

Finally, we asked respondents whether the university they went to was their first choice. The findings show rather small differences which were not statistically significant. Half of the black respondents said the university had been their first choice, the proportions for the other ethnic groups were slightly lower, ranging from 44 to 47 per cent.

5.3 The experience of higher education

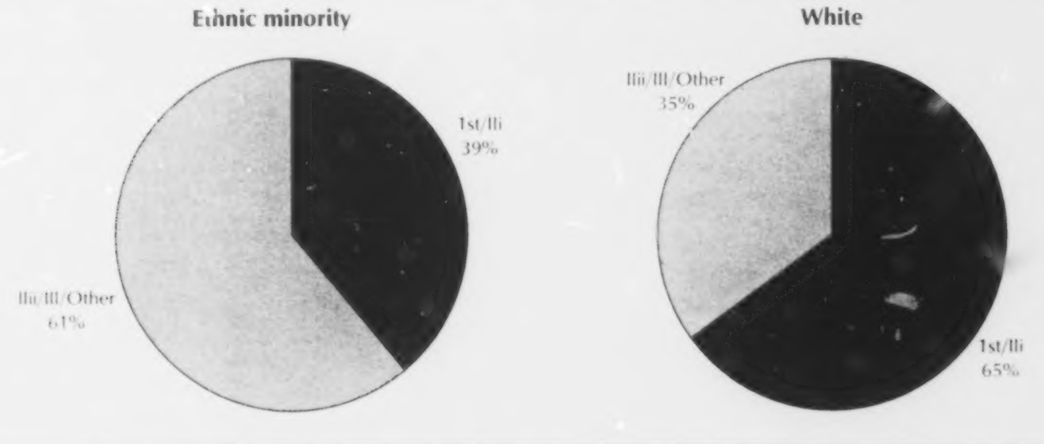
In this section, we first present some of the survey results relating to academic performance. We then explore the interview data which provide an insight into the different experiences of ethnic minority graduates in higher education.

5.3.1 Academic performance

In Chapter 2, findings from other studies showed that ethnic minorities are less likely to have 'traditional' entry qualifications, and even when they do, their 'A' level scores tend to be lower than the average, and this is particularly the case for black students (Modood, 1992; Taylor, 1992). As discussed earlier, these findings have been partly confirmed by our own research.

Our survey findings also highlight some differences in terms of academic performance in higher education. As shown in Figure 5.2, ethnic minority graduates were considerably more likely than their white peers to receive a lower class of degree: 61 per cent of ethnic minority graduates, compared with 35 per cent of

Figure 5.2: Class of degree



Source: IES Survey

white graduates, obtained a lower second or lower class of degree (*nb*, this difference is statistically significant).

Only six of the 25 black respondents included in the sample had obtained a first or upper second degree. The proportion of Asians with a first/upper second degree was 23 per cent, but within the Asian ethnic group, the figures were higher among Indians and Chinese (*ie* both 42 per cent).

These results on degree achievement are important because it was shown earlier in section 5.1.1 that very similar proportions of ethnic minority and white graduates had two or more 'A' level qualifications on entry (70 and 73 per cent), and similar average 'A' level scores (17.4 and 17.5 'points'), but black graduates had generally lower entry qualifications than other respondents.

There are a number of possible reasons behind variations in the academic performance of graduates from different ethnic groups, the exploration of which was beyond the scope of this study. One reason is likely to be racial discrimination, which is discussed further in the next section.

5.3.2 Discrimination in higher education

All four universities included in the study had an equal opportunities policy (as do most, if not all, higher education institutions in the UK). However, we found considerable variations in the extent to which policies were implemented and monitored, not only between the four universities included in the study, but also within the same institutions. This was partly due to the fact that equal opportunities policies were largely implemented and monitored at the departmental or faculty level. However, the existence of powerful organisational sub-cultures also exerted a considerable influence on equal opportunities practices.

While there were examples of survey respondents who had had very positive experiences, the silence or 'lack of noise' about racial discrimination in universities and/or some departments emerged as a key issue in the follow-up interviews. Silence on an issue which profoundly affected some of the respondents' experiences in higher education was seen as a way of avoiding or even denying the existence of the problem. As one respondent explained:

> *'While at university I became acutely aware that as a black person I had to work twice as hard to achieve the same goals as a white person. But this was an issue that neither lecturers nor careers advisors wanted to talk about; they even found it difficult to admit that such fears were real for black students.'*

The denial of discrimination could lead to a sense of powerlessness. On the one hand, respondents' experiences were considerably affected by discrimination; on the other, the problem 'did not exist', and was not considered legitimate by the dominant white culture. The experiences of the respondents quoted below give an illustration of the extent to which 'silence' could disempower and alienate students affected by racial discrimination:

> *'It's real and it's there, but it's only when you are at the receiving end that you will know. It's there and it's real and no matter how much you try to shy away from it, or you don't want to talk about it, it's not going away.'*

> *'Some lecturers were not approachable, they had their "favourites" who they were more willing to help, but there were others they refused to offer any assistance whatsoever, and ethnic minorities were particularly vulnerable to such behaviour . . . . The majority of ethnic minority students just accepted this and got on with their lives. There was no encouragement to talk about these problems, and you felt that if you raised these issues you were going to be singled out for making a fuss.'*

However, the recognition and willingness to deal with the problem of racial discrimination had a considerable positive influence on some graduates. As one respondent explained:

> *'I suffered direct racism and I took it up with my tutor, and it was dealt with, it was not left hanging around.'*

The 'colour blind' approach of Careers Services could also have a negative influence, as respondents had not been 'prepared' to deal with the potential problems they might have to confront in the labour market. Conversely, the experiences of respondents who were offered support and advice on this issue show how important these could be. These helped graduates to come to terms with discrimination in employment, and gave them the confidence to deal with it. The respondent quoted below took part in the university's mentoring scheme to help ethnic minority graduates, and explained how this helped him:

> *'The most important thing [about the mentoring scheme] was that someone was listening to you, someone who thought that what you were saying made sense, someone who understood what you were going through because he is a black person so you can relate to him. You could talk to him, and say: "This is what I think, tell me if I'm being paranoid, if I'm imagining the problems", and he would confirm that my experience reflected that of many other black students. But more importantly he would give me informed advice.'*

The mentoring scheme played a crucial role in this respect and was described by the two respondents who had taken part in the initiative as 'a turning point', and the 'best thing' that happened to them while at university. However, even less 'ambitious' initiatives such as career seminars for ethnic minorities, or simply being encouraged by careers advisers to express their fears about potential discrimination in employment, helped ethnic minority students to deal with the problem in positive ways. Yet, by and large, these 'small gestures' were conspicuous by their absence.

Finally, complaints about ethnic minority students being marked down also emerged as another issue. This problem was not reported by all research participants. However, some of the respondents' accounts suggest that there was a widespread belief that ethnic minority students were likely to get lower grades than their white counterparts. As one respondent put it:

> *'In our course it was always said that an Asian student would never get a first class degree, no matter how good they were.'*

5.3.3 Support and guidance

Our research findings show that while blatant discrimination in higher education was rare, more subtle forms of exclusion and lack of access to informal sources of support were still common. Lack of support from lecturers emerged as an important issue among most interviewees. This could have negative effects on students' performance and undermine their confidence. The respondents quoted below illustrate the different forms of exclusion which emerged from the interviews:

> *'Most of my white friends had the telephone numbers of most lecturers and sometimes when I wanted to contact a tutor I had to speak to some of these white students and ask them to find out when the lecturers will be in college . . . . Lecturers had decided whom to give their numbers so they could call for special assistance, but not to me or those like me.'*

> *'On my course it was well known that lecturers were more helpful to white students, and when we needed information we'd send white students to ask the lecturer, because we knew they would get better information.'*

> *'I never received any support, lecturers never gave feedback, they were very biased, and stereotyped black people, and because of that I often felt that no matter how hard I worked I couldn't succeed.'*

The experiences mentioned above while common, were not universal, and examples of very supportive lectures 'whose door was always open' were also mentioned.

The research findings also show the range of coping strategies ethnic minority students developed to deal with this lack of support. A common reaction was to 'stick together', provide mutual support and 'sort out problems amongst themselves'. Ethnic minority students also took part in their own more formal support structures (*eg* Asian or black student societies) to meet their needs and make their voices heard.

However, as already mentioned earlier, more formalised sources of support, such as the ethnic minority mentoring scheme, were viewed by graduates as probably the most effective ones. The mentoring scheme helps ethnic minority students by providing role models, access to professional networks, and advice and career guidance from someone who might have experienced similar problems. It seemed to help them grow a 'thick skin', to survive and strive in the labour market. The message the scheme wanted to convey to ethnic minority students whose confidence might have been undermined by experiences of discrimination was that:

> *'The door is not completely shut, it is ajar and the role of the mentoring unit is to open it as widely as possible.'*

5.3.4 Accepting diversity

Finally, another interesting point which emerged from the interview data was the extent to which cultural and ethnic diversity was recognised, accepted and valued in higher education. Again, respondents' experiences varied considerably, at one extreme some graduates felt they were well integrated, had a good social life, and felt just like 'any other student'. At other end of the spectrum, there were examples of graduates who felt very isolated, marginalised and alienated from 'white institutions', where dominant values and norms did not reflect their background and experiences.

Respondents' experiences depended partly on the extent to which they were 'integrated' and prepared to 'sacrifice' their ethnic and cultural identity. For example, the respondent quoted below had a very positive experience at university:

> *'I had a very good time, I didn't feel I was ever treated differently because of my ethnicity. I am very outgoing and friendly and I mix well with all sorts of people . . . . Also I went to a very white school, I lived in a white area and most of my friends were white, I have an English accent and I don't act Indian.'*

Students with a stronger attachment to their community, a stronger sense of cultural identity, and whose lifestyles were very different from those of most students, were more likely to experience isolation and marginalisation. These students saw themselves as being 'caught between two cultures', sometimes with conflicting demands and expectations coming from these different realities.

As mentioned earlier in Chapter 3, the 'colour blind' approach of many lecturers and counsellors made it very difficult for some students to express this sense of alienation and even to raise any personal and family problems, even when these were felt to be negatively impinging on academic performance. The assumption was that white lecturers and counsellors would not understand the need to balance two different cultures.

5.4 Conclusions

The interviews with the sample of graduates, albeit small in size (25) and not necessarily representative of the ethnic minority graduate population, have highlighted some interesting points about factors of influence on ethnic minority students in progressing to higher education and their experiences of it. These support much of the existing research evidence from other studies.

In particular, they showed that 'traditional' factors (*eg* family, school) exerted a considerable influence on ethnic minority graduates' progress into higher education. Family influence seems increasingly significant for ethnic minority children from lower social classes, and there was evidence that traditional attitudes towards roles of women were changing. However, many of these positive influences could be mediated by experiences of racial discrimination and lack of support by teachers and careers advisers.

The survey data also confirmed patterns which had emerged from previous studies. While little differences were found between Asians' and whites' entry routes, black graduates were less likely to have the traditional two 'A' level entry qualifications, and had lower 'A' level scores than other respondents. The persistence of low entry qualifications among black graduates could partly explain some of the difficulties they faced subsequently in the labour market (see Chapter 3) caused by employers' use of 'A' level results in the initial graduate selection process (see Strebler and Pike, 1993) and the increasing practice of graduate recruiters targeting the more prestigious universities and departments where entry qualifications are generally higher.

The survey has also shown that ethnic minority graduates (and black graduates in particular) were less likely than whites to obtain a high class of degree, even though ethnic minority (as a group) and white graduates entered with similar entry qualifications (*ie* two 'A' levels, of similar grades). The combination of low pre-degree qualifications and low degree class among black graduates could be key factors underlying the greater labour market disadvantage experienced by some of them (see Chapter 3).

Although these findings on degree class are based on a relatively small sample survey (272 matched ethnic minority and white graduates from four universities), and therefore need to be treated with caution, the differences found between ethnic minority and white graduates in degree class were statistically significant. Taken together with the finding in Chapter 3 that when degree class was controlled for in the analysis much of the difference relating to employment outcomes disappeared, there would seem to be a case for investigating this issue further.

An institution's attitude towards ethnic minorities was an important factor for ethnic minority graduates in their choice of university. Geographical location, facilities, and an institution's reputation were also regarded as more important by ethnic minority students compared with their white peers. Although this sample is based on just four universities, of different types, there may be messages here for universities with policies aimed at increasing ethnic representation.

Finally, the interview findings on ethnic minorities' experiences in higher education show a mixed picture. For some this was a positive experience. However, subtle forms of exclusion and marginalisation, the 'lack of noise' about discrimination, and the 'colour blind' approach of many lecturers, had a considerable negative impact on some interviewees. The experiences of some respondents (*eg* those who took part in a specific mentoring scheme for ethnic minority students) gave an indication of how these difficulties can be overcome.

6. Graduate Recruitment: Employers' Attitudes

6.1 Introduction

We now turn from the graduate to the employer perspective to discuss the views of a sample of employers, and their recruitment policies and practices in relation to ethnic minority graduates. It is not intended to be an exhaustive assessment of policies towards ethnic minority graduates, but rather how those policies affect different groups of graduates. We sought employers' perspectives via interviews with a small sample of ten employers who regularly recruit new graduates. They were mainly large organisations, and were drawn from the manufacturing, legal and business, retail, financial services, transport, public and voluntary sectors. The respondent was, in the first instance, the graduate recruitment manager/officer, and subsequently the equal opportunity manager/officer.

The limitations of the timescale and budget for the study did not allow exploration of differences in recruitment practices between the more established graduate recruiters and the new entrants to graduate recruitment, nor cover the full range of jobs graduates enter. Nevertheless, it was possible to examine differences in graduate recruitment and career development between employers from different sectors, including those with established graduate recruitment and training programmes and those without such programmes. The discussion in this chapter must also be viewed against a background of rapid changes in the organisational structures of companies, and its consequent effects on graduate demand, graduate skill requirements, organisational cultures, devolvement of responsibilities for graduate recruitment from the centre, development of specific company-wide courses of action for particular groups of staff, and so on (see for example Kettley, 1995 on flatter structures).

The chapter has four principal aims:

- To assess the level of ethnic minority representation or under-representation in organisations, in particular, ethnic minority graduate representation.
- To explore the recruitment and selection policies and processes in organisations, with particular respect to recruitment of graduates, and ethnic minority graduates in particular.

- To explore employers' attitudes to recruiting ethnic minority graduates, and to chart the progress graduates make, on the whole, in the organisations; in particular their progress through training and career development.
- To explore employers' commitment to equal opportunities for ethnic minority graduates.

6.2 Representation of ethnic minorities

The drive for efficiency within organisations has led to changes in their structures. In some cases this has led to the erosion of layers of management functions, as responsibility is devolved from the centre to local areas (in the case of retail organisations, for example) or departments (in the case of local authorities). At the same time, the introduction of new technology has also resulted in changes in administrative functions, most of which are now computerised. Indeed not only do the new technologies require new skills, but they also dispense with much of the existing or old skills. Another important development is the outsourcing of services, such as IT functions, to outside organisations. The overall effect on employment is that restructuring has combined with cost considerations to force reductions in the workforce of many organisations. With the possible exception of the food retail sector, which has continued to expand as a result of new store developments, most employers have cut their workforces through programmes of redeployment, early retirements and voluntary redundancies.

The evidence from our interviews with employers suggests that ethnic minority employees are likely to be affected disproportionately by changes in the structure of organisations, given that the majority of them are found in the lower occupational groups which have borne the brunt of cuts in the workforce.

Among the organisations interviewed for this study, ethnic minority employees represented between three per cent (in the case of a large building society) and 15 per cent (in the case of a local authority) of the workforce. Without exception, the majority of ethnic minority employees in these organisations were to be found in lower grade occupations: in administrative, clerical and other lower grade white collar jobs. They were less represented in the higher structures of management, accounting for less than one per cent of senior managers among the companies surveyed. There was little or no accurate information on ethnic minority graduate representation, or even reliable estimates, in the organisations interviewed for this study. However, to the extent that such senior positions are occupied by graduates, ethnic minority graduates can be said to be under-represented in senior positions. In this respect, there was no difference between public and private sector organisations, in terms of ethnic minority representation at the top.

The under-representation of ethnic minorities at senior managerial level can be attributed, to some extent, to the fact that people tend to work their way up within organisations. It is reasonable, therefore, to assume that as their careers develop, they are likely to advance to senior positions and compose a more representative proportion of senior management posts. But, as a recent study by the Local Government Management Board (LGMB, 1992) has pointed out, there are equally powerful organisational barriers which can prevent the advance of ethnic minorities. Thus, the major blocks to their progress into senior positions may lie less with ethnic minority employees themselves, but in the organisations they work for. For example, it was suggested to us (by a voluntary sector organisation) that:

> *'the people who show skill, energy and expertise happen to be largely white. They happen to do what the organisation wants quicker.'*

For this establishment, the barriers are rooted not in the practices of the whole organisation, but with particular individuals or groups to whom much responsibility has been devolved. Paradoxically, devolved responsibility also provides the opportunity for individuals or departments within organisations to target ethnic minority groups if they so wish, although only one of the employers interviewed has introduced such a policy of targeting ethnic minorities.

6.3 Recruitment and selection policies and practices

Almost all the employers interviewed have what can be described as 'graduate level employment'. These are jobs which require a graduate qualification, particularly if the post-holders are required subsequently to study for professional qualifications. Increasingly though, as outlined in Chapter 2, many graduates are taking jobs for which employers do not necessarily seek a graduate qualification, and fewer are entering via formal graduate recruitment (or trainee) programmes.

While most organisations have no accurate information on the true number of graduates recruited in a year, the impression gained from the interviews with employers is that more ethnic minority graduates than whites are prepared to take 'non-graduate jobs'. This lends some support to our findings reported earlier (in Chapter 3) that ethnic minority graduates are more likely than their white peers to feel under-employed.

6.3.1 Recruitment methods

The interviews confirmed the longer term changes in graduate recruitment and selection, discussed earlier (see section 2.3.1). Fewer now advertise graduate posts in the national or local press, and usually only for specialist functions or high grade posts. As part of their policy to appeal to a wider audience, a number of them advertise in publications targeted at ethnic minority graduates, such as *Kaleidoscope*, as well as the ethnic press *(eg, The Voice)* newspaper. This is in addition to the established graduate publications and recruitment directories. Graduate fairs and 'milkrounds', are becoming less popular, and employers are increasingly focusing on targeting specific universities or holding open days at their own premises, to which potential recruits are invited. Although it is not a widespread practice, there is considerable internal recruitment, especially of graduates doing non-graduate jobs. It is seen as part of the ethos of organisations which use this method, to encourage self-development amongst their employees. In one large food retailer, internal recruitment accounted for about 20 per cent of the retail management trainee intake. Employers also recruit through work experience schemes such as student placements, and vacation jobs. There is no widespread use of informal (word of mouth) recruitment, although this method is used mainly by a voluntary sector organisation we interviewed.

Except for the less frequent use of 'milkrounds' and more targeting of universities, these main methods of recruitment have been in place over the last few years or so.

6.3.2 Shortlisting and selection

Whilst the recruitment methods of most organisations are not changing significantly, there is more noticeable change in the criteria they use when shortlisting and selecting candidates. Perhaps the most significant of the criteria, in terms of its likely impact on the recruitment of ethnic minorities, is employers' preference for graduates from the pre-1992 universities. Blue chip companies we interviewed, in particular, have a clear preference for graduates from pre-1992 universities, and have little or no contact with most post-1992 universities (former polytechnics, where ethnic minority students are concentrated, see Chapter 2), especially those which do not run graduate fairs. In some cases, this is the result of long-established relationships with particular departments, in others, it is because they are seen as more likely to supply a continuous flow of graduates with high academic ability and achievement.

On the other hand, a number of organisations we interviewed attempted to recruit from a mix of pre- and post-1992 universities. Among the factors likely to favour the newer (post-1992) universities in certain instances is their location. The new universities located in London, for example, are likely to be targeted, whilst in the regions, locations in or near to Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham and Bristol were seen to be advantageous. A few new universities were also being specifically targeted by companies because they had developed with them specific courses, such as retail management, which are not offered by the older universities. It appeared paradoxical that a large legal firm which recruits its graduates almost exclusively from pre-1992 universities, nevertheless sends its recruits to study for the Legal Practice Course (LPC) at a number of HEIs, including two new universities. Only one of the employers we interviewed had a policy to increase recruitment of ethnic minority graduates to better reflect the rest of its workforce, and was targeting specific (invariably new) universities with a high proportion of ethnic minority students.

Almost as important as the type of university, is the use of academic qualification as a criterion for shortlisting candidates. This is not new and was identified in the early 1990s by Strebler and Pike in their research on shortlisting of graduates. That research specifically highlighted the weaknesses of relying on 'A' levels as indicators of degree performance, apart from those with very high grades. It also showed the extent to which the pool of potential applicants could be widened to include more older graduates with non-traditional qualifications (including ethnic minority graduates) by relying less on traditional academic qualifications in shortlisting practices. As found in that study, degree class and the type of qualification had an important bearing on the recruitment process in the sample of companies here. Those organisations which recruit mainly from the pre-1992 universities were found also to be more likely to use degree class as a criterion for shortlisting. For one recently privatised company, for example, the minimum requirement for selection is a upper second degree. Where organisations also look for consistently strong academic records, it is not unusual for them to attach some importance to the number and grades of 'A' level results of applicants, in addition to the degree class they obtain on graduation. Not surprisingly, these organisations do not accept applications from graduates with non-traditional qualifications, such as HNC/ONC, HND and BTEC. On the face of it, this would seem to be unfair to certain groups, such as some ethnic minority graduates, who are more likely to have entered HE via the vocational route.

An important development which emerged from the interviews is the use of standard application forms for graduates, linked to another emerging trend — competence-based criteria for shortlisting and selection. Increasingly, application forms are structured around competencies which candidates are expected to demonstrate. The competence framework is likely to cover, among other aspects, candidates' work-related experience, interpersonal skills, leadership and performance management, team membership skills, power of analysis and problem solving, communication skills, flexibility and adaptability, drive and motivation. The use of competencies is intended to make preselection 'colour blind', but more relevant to the jobs they will be expected to do. Thus, candidates' bio-data and demonstrable competencies have become the main criteria for the initial screening of potential graduate recruits. In this respect, some of the organisations we interviewed place considerable importance on careful completion of application forms, and reject most candidates at this stage of the recruitment process for poor presentation, as will be seen later.

6.3.3 Recruitment difficulties

The relatively small numbers of graduates within large organisations means that very few of those we interviewed had attempted to establish if there are any differences or trends in performance between white and ethnic minority candidates during the selection process. The evidence which emerged from our discussions with employers suggests that organisations have not been short of ethnic minority applicants. However, the applications are not usually converted to job offers because many ethnic minority applicants do not possess, or fail to demonstrate, the competencies which organisations look for in potential recruits. On the whole, more ethnic minority applicants, compared with whites, fail to get through each successive phase of the recruitment process. Employers gave specific reasons why ethnic minority applicants are not as successful in the selection process (in proportion to the numbers who apply) as their white peers. Among the comments made by employers are the following:

> *'One of the main reasons for the rejection of ethnic minority candidates was because their degree was 3rd Class (44 per cent). These students still applied even though our published minimum is a 'good second class honours degree', as compared with 14 per cent of white students who were rejected for the same reason.'*
>
> *'Poor presentation was never the only reason for rejection . . . , but for 19% of ethnic minority applicants, it was an additional factor in their rejection. This compares with only two per cent of white applicants rejected . . . whose applications were considered poor. Poor presentation includes applications which were partially completed, obvious corrections where words or lines have been scored out or blatantly tippexed . . . . Barely legible handwriting . . . . Typewritten sections pasted into the application form . . . poor English and grammar.'*
>
> *'There is a perception that ethnic minority applicants place different interpretations on some of the competencies that they are required to demonstrate. For example, Asians would not cite their work experience in helping with family businesses as part of a challenge faced, nor overcoming problems encountered in the process as an achievement.'*

These comments go some way to support the findings we have reported in earlier chapters about the disadvantages which ethnic minority graduates face in the labour market. Because they have either lower entry or non-traditional entry qualifications, they are affected more when pre-university academic qualifications are used as a criterion for selection. Preference for graduates from pre-1992 universities is another source of disadvantage, as is a lower degree class.

While these are comments on the mainly objective criteria for selection, others are on rather subjective criteria, and raise a serious issue of bias in recruitment practices. Thus, one employer opined:

> *'the difficulty is that they do not happen to be good. The impression is that white people are more articulate in English, and are more organised than ethnic minorities.'*

Several organisations expressed concern about the deficiencies which hinder the successful recruitment of ethnic minority graduates. Some of these have embarked on initiatives to tackle some of the more obvious problems. These include plans to run workshops for prospective ethnic minority graduate applicants on how to complete application forms, and how to prepare for interviews. There is a perception that a significant number of ethnic minority applicants are disadvantaged at this important stage of the recruitment process not only because they lack such skills, but also because they have inadequate information or support on how to develop and improve upon such skills. Some of the initiatives are undertaken either by individual organisations themselves, or in collaboration with organisations such as the Windsor Fellowship.

It is also true to say that, in some cases, the difficulty in recruiting ethnic minority graduates can be linked directly to their under-representation in the universities from which companies prefer to recruit, and in certain degree subjects. But it is equally true to say that many ethnic minority graduates perceive some establishments (City institutions and firms, for example) to be virtual 'no go areas' or 'Anglo-Saxon fortresses'. They are put off from applying for jobs in these companies, firstly because they think they do not stand a chance and, secondly because even if they obtained a job, they would face a hostile environment. There is no doubt that some firms are aware of this 'stigma', and are joining in initiatives aimed at attracting more ethnic minority applicants. They are encouraged, for example, to attend open days to see how such firms operate, thereby raising their awareness of such firms. Companies with significant international operations, particularly in the newly industrialised countries, are seeking to ensure their recruits reflect that fact, and are at the forefront of such initiatives.

6.4 Training and career development

Established graduate recruiters are more likely to have a formal training and development programme for their graduate recruits. Graduates follow a structured training programme which lasts for between one and four years. With few exceptions, trainees are recruited to specialist areas, or are expected to specialise in particular areas of the organisations' operations. Even where organisations do not have a formal graduate training programme (in local authorities, for example), there are jobs which are considered to be, or described as, 'career grade' jobs, and which require specific skills for which a programme of formal training may be set. Differences exist, though, between graduates recruited through a graduate recruitment programme (GRP) and other non-GRP graduates.

6.4.1 Graduate training programmes

The graduate training programmes in the employers we visited combine a mix of hands-on and theoretical training in different areas or departments within the organisation. For the most part, they are likely to include: assignment-based learning, a combination of professional and personal training, targeted professional qualifications, and self-development. They are fairly typical of company graduate entry and training programmes.

In general, graduate training is monitored closely under programmes designed specifically for the purpose. Monitoring is, in the first instance, assessment by departmental managers at the end of each 'placement'. There is, invariably, a formal appraisal or assessment, which may include tests at regular periods during the training. Formal monitoring is usually the responsibility of specialists in personnel departments.

6.4.2 Training of non-GRP graduates

Many organisations make training available to non-GRP graduates, usually through development funds for which most other employees are eligible to apply. For the most part though, the provision of training and development for non-GRP graduates depends on matching the needs of individuals and those of the organisation. Selection for training, in such cases, is greatly influenced by line managers, whose judgement of the potential of prospective candidates is critical. Indeed, in some cases non-GRP graduates must be recommended or 'sponsored' by their line managers. Where such support is unnecessarily withheld, graduates can seek redress through grievance procedures. Where they exist, the training available to non-GRP graduates is likely typically to mirror that offered to GRP graduates. But it is rare for such graduates to be asked to specialise in particular areas within organisations, if only because they have not been identified as a pool to develop for future management or specialists jobs. There is no evidence to suggest there is under-selection of non-GRP ethnic minority graduates, if only because organisations do not collect such information.

Despite the formal structures of their graduate recruitment programmes, the organisations interviewed for this study do not carry out research or collect information which is likely to show if there are differences in performance between white and ethnic minority graduates during their training. It is assumed by them that there are no differences, since all trainees are selected on the same criteria, and follow the same course or programme.

6.4.3 Post-training development

Whilst graduate training is highly structured, there are considerable differences amongst organisations in post-training development. For a greater number, no formal structures exist for the career development of individuals. After initial training and development, such graduates take on increasing responsibilities. But how far and how fast they progress depends entirely on their ability and their performance in their jobs. There is, on the whole, no formal monitoring or evaluation of subsequent training and development, except by crude self-assessment.

For a few of the organisations we visited, though, post-training career development is very well structured. Initially, this is likely to be part of personnel department functions. But as graduates progress to more senior levels, responsibility for their career development is likely to be undertaken more at the corporate level. Some organisations have designed specific development programmes to train graduates for middle and senior management positions. In some instances this may include graduates being sponsored on MBA courses. However, even in organisations with more developed structures, much of post-training development is still determined by the qualities individuals display. Such individuals as are selected for further career development programmes must have the potential to be promoted beyond their current positions. Such qualities are expected to be picked up or exposed through formal appraisal systems; needless to say that the views of line managers in particular, are critical in the selection process. But even here too, there is no extensive monitoring of post-training development.

In the absence of formal monitoring, it is difficult to determine if there is under-representation of ethnic minority graduates for post-training development. Moreover, line managers exert a disproportionate influence on who receives training, and thereby accentuate the risk of bias, if any, in the selection of individuals.

6.4.4 Promotion

Promotion also appears to be less structured in many organisations, and depends essentially on individual ability and willingness to apply for higher posts when they come up, albeit with the support or recommendation of line managers. An informal 'go for it' system of promotion appears to be the norm. It must be stressed, however, that graduates are made aware of the channels of promotion at their recruitment interviews and during their training. They know they would be expected to achieve a certain level of expertise while on a graduate training programme, and that the programme is unlikely to take them beyond that level. Progression beyond that level therefore depends, typically, on individual performance and achievement. Indeed, some organisations encourage their graduate trainees to seek promotion towards the end of their initial training, and give guidance about which areas of the organisation where their skills can best be deployed or utilised.

There is evidence to suggest that employers and graduates alike are beginning to express dissatisfaction with the 'informal system' of career development and promotion (see for example Jackson *et al.*, 1995, *Managing Careers in 2000 and Beyond*). Some of the employers interviewed indicated they are not satisfied with the fact that *'the right people are not being promoted at the right time'*. Indeed, there is a suspicion that *'too much (of promotion) happens by chance, and not through ability or training'*. They intend to develop new structures to determine, for example, *'selection of who might best benefit from what type of development programme'*. For their part, graduates have questioned the commitment of employers to meet their career development needs. An internal attitude survey recently carried out by a large financial sector organisation, highlighted some of the concerns, with graduates commenting that *'at the end of two years (of training), I am expected to make my way in the world'*. Such dissatisfaction has prompted some organisations to reassess their career development and promotion procedures for graduates. It was also highlighted as far back as 1990 in research by Connor, Strebler and Hirsh about problems in the early careers of graduates.

Among the companies interviewed, it is generally believed there is equality of opportunity, as far as selection for promotion is concerned, irrespective of by which route graduates enter the organisations. This was based on opinion only and not on any concrete monitoring information.

6.5 Equal opportunity policy and practice

Almost all the organisations interviewed for this study have a written equal opportunities policy, and are committed to providing equality of opportunity in employment. Without exception, their equal opportunities policies include ethnicity, gender and disability, and are applied during graduate recruitment (*eg* in their recruitment literature, statements in advertising, interviewing techniques, *etc.*). However, equal opportunities practices vary considerably amongst the organisations, with significant differences in commitment between public or quasi-public, and private sector organisations. The motivation for private sector organisations is that an equal opportunities policy will enable them recruit bright individuals with a wide range of skills, regardless of any other factors. But equality of opportunity is also seen to be increasingly important for those private sector companies which have significant international or global operations. For public and quasi-public sector organisations, on the other hand, the policy seeks to ensure there is fair representation and equality of opportunity at all levels. Consequently, by providing them with a written policy, these organisations aim to ensure that their employees are aware of its aims and objectives, and their role in its implementation. There is anecdotal evidence to suggest that ethnic minority graduates are particularly attracted to public sector employers because of their stance on equal opportunities, and this was partly confirmed by our own findings from the interviews with graduates (see Chapter 4).

The level of commitment of the organisations interviewed to equality of opportunity appeared to determine the structures which support the policy. Organisations with a strong commitment were more likely to have elaborate structures, including committees with responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the policy when necessary. Similarly, there was considerably more support for equal opportunities policies amongst senior managers and directors within such organisations. However, there were other organisations where equal opportunities policies do not enjoy the wholehearted support in the upper echelons of management. As one of the respondents in our interviews commented, equality of opportunity is primarily seen as *'something that is nice to do'*.

In theory, equal opportunities policies are seen as effective tools for organisations seeking information on recruitment and selection monitoring, the composition of the existing workforce, measures to redress under-representation, and positive action. In practice, though, few of the organisations we interviewed use their equal opportunities monitoring procedures to institute changes in their employment practices. Only one of the organisations we interviewed had sought to address the issue of ethnic minority under-representation among its workforce as a whole, but more specifically in the more senior positions. In 1987 that public sector organisation set an overall target of 20 per cent ethnic minority representation. Subsequent evidence showed that although this target was achieved within the workforce as a whole, it was not reflected at the different levels or grades of occupation. A new policy has recently been introduced for the 20 per cent target to be achieved at each level.

One of the dilemmas which organisations face in putting policy into practice, is finding an acceptable definition of what constitutes under-representation. As we mentioned earlier in this chapter, ethnic minority representation varies enormously among firms. But there is a perception that organisations rely on such uncertainty as a reason for inaction. This is demonstrated by the fact that when they need to, organisations have taken steps to avoid the potential cost implications of actions which may be brought against them at industrial tribunals for unfair practices, including under-representation of particular groups. Indeed, one of the companies we interviewed was recently

challenged by the Equal Opportunity Commission in Northern Ireland for not having a fair representation of the two communities of the province among its workforce. As a result, the company has made monitoring an essential part of its recruitment practice throughout the UK. Employees are now monitored at each stage of the recruitment process (application, shortlisting, interview and final selection) by a recruitment officer, to observe the progress of different groups. What is less certain, in this and other examples of the initiatives of other organisations we interviewed, is subsequent action emanating from the monitoring process.

6.6 Attitudes towards ethnic minority graduates

None of the companies we interviewed perceived there to be any difference between ethnic minority and white graduates, in terms of preferential treatment by management, or in supervision in training and career development. Neither did they believe there to be preference in selection for training and promotion. It must be emphasised, though, that these are purely subjective assessments by them, which are not backed up by study or research, either on the specific issues of training and promotion, or on differences in performance between white and ethnic minority graduates. While there may not be noticeable differences in the early years of graduates' careers, it is quite possible that differences emerge later. Indeed, this may partly explain the fact that there are fewer graduates of ethnic minority origin in senior positions within the organisations. A number of factors could be at work, among which is not only their small numbers overall, but also how well ethnic minority graduates feel integrated into the structures of organisations. What emerges clearly from our study of the attitudes of employers is that because there are no obvious or perceived differences in performance, the majority do not, consequently, perceive there to be specific advantages or disadvantages in employing ethnic minority graduates. We found only one example of an organisation which believes employing ethnic minority graduates is good for its business, in publicity terms and improving sales, since a significantly important proportion of its customers is drawn from ethnic minority groups. Their comment on the specific benefit is quoted here to emphasise some of the other advantages:

> *'The business can also benefit from having a diverse range of people working for it. It is known, for example, that in some local stores, managers of Caribbean origin have introduced and sourced a range of non-traditional vegetables, and significantly increased turnover as a result.'*

Such examples, though, are few indeed. Overall, the companies we interviewed perceive that their attitude, together with that of the rest of their workforce, towards people of ethnic minority origin is 'fine'. But this may be mainly one of complacency.

6.7 Summary

The main points emerging from the interviews with the sample of graduate recruiters were:

- Ethnic minorities represented between three and 15 per cent of employment in the organisations interviewed for the study. The majority of these were in the lower grade occupations. Very few occupied senior management positions.
- Although employers have 'graduate level employment', a number of graduates are also taking 'non-graduate' jobs. Ethnic minority graduates are more likely than their white peers to take such jobs. It is a contributory factor to the feeling of under-employment experienced by ethnic minority graduates (reported in the survey).
- The main change in recruitment methods is less emphasis being given to the graduate 'milkround' and more targeting of specific universities and courses. The latter tends to be focused on older (pre-1992) universities with low proportions of ethnic minority students.
- Ethnic minority graduates are more likely to be disadvantaged in the selection process because they fail to meet the criteria by which employers shortlist and select their recruits. Pre-university entry qualifications, the type of higher education institution, and degree class, are the main sources of disadvantage. There is increasing use of competence-based criteria, which can help to eliminate disadvantage, although it is unclear as yet if that aim is being achieved.
- The early career development of graduate recruits is generally structured and, therefore, less likely to show any significant differences in performance between ethnic minority and white graduates. Post-training development and promotion, on the other hand, are less structured. Subjective rather than objective factors, such as the influence of line managers, have a considerable bearing on the progress which individuals or groups subsequently make.
- Equal opportunities policies are applied extensively during the recruitment process. However, the support which such policies enjoy among senior managers varied, particularly between public and private sector organisations in the study.
- None of the employers interviewed perceived there to be any difference between their white and ethnic minority graduates in terms of preferential treatment by managers, or in their supervision or performance. However, the absence of formal monitoring of graduates in selection, but particularly during subsequent training and development in most organisations, makes it difficult to assess the true extent of disadvantage for ethnic minorities. This is not a high priority for most organisations and would appear to be one factor behind the general inaction in taking steps to remedy any under-representation.

7. Summary and Conclusions

The overall aim of the research was to investigate the employment outcomes and career progress of ethnic minority graduates, and make comparisons with white graduates. It met this aim via reviews of the available data and research literature, a follow-up survey of a small sample of 1993 graduates (272), and interviews with ethnic minority graduates (25), careers advisers at four universities, and employers (10). In this final chapter, we draw together the main findings of the different components of the research by focusing on:

- trends in participation of ethnic minorities in higher education, and factors of influence in choice of study
- graduate employment patterns, in particular, differences between ethnic groups in their first and current jobs and early career histories
- attitudes of graduates from ethnic minorities towards their employment experiences and career progress to date
- attitudes of employers to ethnic minority graduates, their recruitment and career development practices and policies.

The survey was based on a sample of 1993 graduates from four universities, two new (post-1992) and two established (pre-1992) institutions. The survey response was lower than expected, at 39 per cent, and the number of ethnic graduates it produced was lower, too. This limited the analysis possible and also meant that some of the survey conclusions are less robust. The survey analysis was based on a matched sample of the ethnic minority graduates with a sub-sample of white respondents (272 in total). Matching was done by type of university, subject, age and gender.

An employer perspective was obtained from interviews in a small sample of companies, ten in all, mainly established graduate recruiters from a range of employment sectors.

7.1 Ethnic minorities in higher education

7.1.1 Distribution in the student population

Recently available data, covering all UK publicly funded higher education institutions, provide for the first time a comprehensive analysis of the ethnic characteristics of the student population (HESA, 1995). This shows that in December 1994:

- Almost one in eight, 11.5 per cent, of all UK domiciled higher education students (of known ethnicity, covering 70 per cent of the total student population), were from ethnic minority groups.
- Representation of ethnic minorities at first degree level was 11.3 per cent, and at other undergraduate level (*eg* HND, DipHE) 13.5 per cent; it was slightly lower at postgraduate level (10.4 per cent of taught and 9.1 per cent of research postgraduate UK domiciled students were from ethnic minorities).
- The distribution of ethnic minority groups is very uneven in terms of level, mode and subject of study:
    - The largest ethnic minority group represented at first degree level is Indian (27 per cent of all non-whites); and the smallest is Bangladeshi (three per cent).
    - Chinese and 'other-Asians' are better represented at postgraduate research level than on first degrees, and Africans are better represented on postgraduate taught courses than at other levels.
    - Part-time first degree study is more prevalent among African-Caribbeans and 'black-other' groups than Asians or Whites.
    - Asians, in particular Indians and Pakistanis, are more likely to be studying medicine and dentistry at undergraduate level than whites or any other ethnic groups; business and administrative studies and computer science are more popular choices for most ethnic minority groups than for whites, while education is generally less popular among ethnic minorities.
- Women are unevenly represented among ethnic minority students, ranging from over 60 per cent of African-Caribbeans to around 50 per cent of whites, Chinese and Indians, and to around 40 per cent of Bangladeshis and Pakistanis.
- Mature students on first degrees are disproportionately represented among some ethnic minority groups, in particular black groups where over 70 per cent are aged 21 years or over, and half are 25 years or older. By contrast, Indian first degree students tend to be younger on average than whites.
- Entry qualifications vary by ethnic group: over half of white and Asian students entered with the traditional qualifications of 'A' levels or Highers in 1994, compared with around a third of black students where access and vocational qualifications were more common. This is undoubtedly linked to the older age profiles of black entrants.
- There is a strong link between mode of study, gender and subject choice of ethnic minorities, which explains some of the differences between ethnic groups.

7.1.2 Application trends

Both applications from ethnic minorities and their rate of admission to universities have been increasing over time. In 1994, 13.2 per cent of total applications to first degree full-time study through the UCAS admissions system were from ethnic minorities. The latest figure for 1996 entry is 14.0 per cent.

As might be expected, application rates differ by ethnic group and gender, and there are concentrations of ethnic groups in certain subjects, as highlighted above in the student data. These differences are not new and were shown to exist in the early 1990s by various researchers.

In the past, ethnic minorities were more likely to apply to polytechnics than universities (and more likely to be admitted also) and, while the gap between the new (*ie* post-1992, mainly former polytechnics and colleges) and older universities (pre-1992) has narrowed, there remain big differences in the proportion of ethnic minorities among applicants to different universities.

Previous research has also shown that ethnic minority applicants, in particular black applicants, were less likely to have two or more 'A' levels, and that while the mean 'A' level scores for whites, Chinese, Indians and Asian-other applicants were similar, they were higher than for black applicants, especially African-Caribbeans. Mean 'A' level scores were lower in applications from ethnic minorities compared to whites, and in applications to polytechnics compared to universities (pre-1992), but the pattern between ethnic groups was similar in both sub-sectors at that time. There are no currently available data analysed separately on applications to the pre- and post-1992 universities.

7.1.3 Admissions trends

The growth in admissions of ethnic minorities to full-time degree courses reflects some of the wider changes that have taken place recently in higher education. These include its broader range of provision, widening access policies, and greater diversity in the student population. These changes have not taken place evenly across the higher education sector, and individual universities have widely differing student profiles, including different ethnic profiles. The representation of ethnic minorities on first degree courses ranges from over 30 per cent at a few of the new (post-1992) universities which were formerly polytechnics or colleges of higher education, to under ten per cent at many of the universities established pre-1992.

7.1.4 Effective participation

In respect to their position in the UK population, where only 5.8 per cent of the population are from ethnic minorities (but slightly more in the younger age groups), the effective participation rate of ethnic minorities in higher education is similar to whites overall. However, there is still considerable variation by gender and ethnic group: in particular, male Africans, Indians, Chinese and Asian-others are better represented than male whites, and female Bangladeshis are less represented than any other female ethnic groups.

7.2 Influences on participation in higher education

Various factors of influence have been identified in previous research as being of importance in explaining the differences in participation rates in higher education of different ethnic groups and on their distribution across different parts of the sector. These include:

- Prior academic achievement and education routes — staying-on rates in education beyond 16 are greater among ethnic minorities as a whole than whites, and highest among African-Asians, Chinese and Africans. Ethnic minorities are also more likely than whites to be doing so in further education than at school; and they are more likely to take vocational or access qualifications and take 'A' level re-sits.
- Early career guidance and subject choice — evidence exists of racial stereotyping and 'channelling' of ethnic minorities into certain courses or occupations.
- The image, culture and style of certain universities — ethnic minority students are more likely to apply to universities which have more of an ethnic profile. Attitudes of staff to ethnic minorities, projection of a multi-cultural image in prospectuses, provision of particular courses and access policies are all important factors in choice of university by ethnic minorities, as is geographical location. There is more of a tendency for ethnic minority than white students to apply to a limited number of universities close to home.
- Personal characteristics such as age, gender, social class, home background and parental influence are also important factors explaining some of the differences between some, or parts of, ethnic groups.

There was also some evidence of direct discrimination in admissions and selection practices of universities in the early 1990s. The new admissions process and the development of equal opportunities policies in institutions, however, are expected to have led to a diminution of this, though there is no more up-to-date evidence to support this view.

The findings of the graduate survey and interviews undertaken as part of this study confirm some of these influences on early career development, though it needs to be noted that they were both based on relatively small samples (see above). In particular, the survey showed consistent differences between ethnic groups in entry qualifications, though very little difference between all ethnic minority and white graduates. In particular, black respondents had lower entry qualifications. Our study was generally less conclusive than previous research in identifying ethnic differences because we controlled for type of institution. There are considerable differences between institutions in their average entry qualifications and in access policies, especially attitudes to non-traditional applicants.

Ethnic minority graduates' decision to enter higher education was influenced mainly by 'traditional' factors. Positive influences, such as family and school encouragement, were moderated by the experiences of discrimination or anticipation of discrimination, in particular the perception of feasible career options by themselves, as well as by teachers and careers advisers. The interviews also showed how higher education is seen as increasingly important among working class Asian and black families as a way of overcoming labour market disadvantage. Similarly, there was an indication among Asian groups that higher education is increasingly being seen as an acceptable option for young women.

In the survey, over twice as many ethnic minority than white graduates considered their university's attitude to ethnic minority students as an important factor in choosing it. Black graduates appeared to be influenced more by this than others. They were also more influenced by the university's attitude to older students. Geographical location was a decisive factor for slightly more ethnic minority graduates than white ones, and it was also particularly important for black graduates. So, too, was its reputation, especially for Asian students. By contrast, white graduates were more likely to be influenced by the choice of subjects available.

7.3 Experiences at university

The graduate interview data provided some insights into ethnic minority graduates' experiences at universities. These present a mixed picture. For some it was a positive experience, but for others, subtle forms of exclusion and marginalisation, the lack of reaction from other students and staff about discrimination, and the 'colour blind' approach of many lecturers had a negative impact. The experiences of some graduates who had taken part in particular initiatives aimed at helping ethnic minority students, such as the Mentoring Scheme, gave an indication of how these difficulties could be overcome.

The research adds to the limited evidence from the literature that some ethnic minority students face difficulties at some universities, both academically and socially, which may lead to dropping out, or poor performance at graduation. While we did not gather any evidence from universities relating to differential completion rates by ethnic group, the survey showed that the ethnic minority graduates were more likely than white graduates to obtain a lower class of degree. Even taking into consideration entry qualifications, the levels of academic performance between ethnic groups were different.

7.4 Employment patterns

7.4.1 Previous research evidence

A small amount of evidence exists in the research literature on employment outcomes and subsequent career progress of graduates. Most refers to a period in the 1980s when the graduate market was different from today (*eg* smaller in size, less broad based, more focused on large employers). It suggests that ethnic minority graduates, on the whole:

- experience greater difficulties in the labour market than white graduates
- do less well in securing good jobs
- are less satisfied with their career progress and resulting rewards in the labour market
- experience some discrimination by employers.

Degree subject is a factor highlighted in previous studies as affecting employment outcomes. As ethnic minority graduates are concentrated in particular subjects (*eg* business studies, computer science) and not in others (*eg* education), this is thought to explain much of the difference between ethnic groups in their sectoral and occupational distributions.

Other evidence from labour market research, principally analysis of the Labour Force survey and 1991 Census of Population, shows that although a higher proportion of the ethnic minority workforce are highly qualified (to above 'A' levels) compared with whites, their unemployment levels are higher also. It also highlights a more uneven pattern of disadvantage between ethnic minority groups than suggested by the earlier graduate studies. With the exception of African-Caribbeans, highly qualified men from ethnic minorities are more likely to be in professional jobs than similarly qualified white men. For women, the pattern was less clear, but there were some ethnic groups where the position of highly qualified women in professional or managerial occupations was more favourable than that of white women.

There is also a range of evidence on disadvantage of ethnic minorities in specific occupations and professions, *eg* accountancy, law and teaching, some of which have been subject to investigation and action taken.

7.4.2 Graduate survey findings

The main purpose of the graduate survey was to investigate graduates' early career progress and explore some of the issues identified in the earlier research relating to labour market disadvantage. In particular, it aimed to provide more up-to-date evidence about the recent experiences of ethnic minority graduates in today's rather different graduate labour market.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, because of a low survey response rate and a small sample size, some of the survey conclusions need to be treated with caution. Nevertheless, they do point to useful directions for further inquiry.

The survey provides evidence that some disadvantage continues to exist for graduates from ethnic minorities, but these differences are not always consistent and some may relate more to their educational background (*eg* routes taken into university, degree class and type of institution) than specifically to their ethnicity. Differences between ethnic groups were clearly identifiable: in particular, black graduates were identified as having most problems in relation to level of employment (*ie* more felt under-employed, fewer were in professional level jobs), while in some respects the employment situation of Indians was similar to that of whites.

Other points of interest were:

- Slight differences were evident in the career histories of white and ethnic minority graduates, with the former consistently more likely to be employed and less likely to be unemployed in the two and a half years after graduation. There was insufficient evidence to confirm that the gap between ethnic minorities and white graduates narrowed over time (as previous research has suggested).
- Ethnic minority graduates had experienced more periods of unemployment than white graduates, and their longest unemployed period was greater in duration on average. Ethnic minorities were considerably more likely than whites to link their employment difficulties to lack of suitable educational qualifications and skills, while whites were more likely to blame labour market factors (*eg* competition, lack of vacancies).
- Ethnic minority graduates were slightly more likely to have taken further study within the first 18 months after their degree. They were less likely than whites to have taken a professional course and more likely to have studied for a masters, PhD or postgraduate diploma in higher education.
- It took ethnic minority graduates longer to secure their first job after graduation, the main variation being between black and Indian respondents who took longer on average than the other ethnic groups. However, when class of degree was

controlled for, this difference reduced. Ethnic minorities also needed to apply for more jobs before being successful.

- The first job of white female graduates was more likely to be full-time than for women from ethnic minorities. There were similar proportions of ethnic minority and white respondents working in temporary jobs or on short-term contracts.
- Ethnic minority graduates were slightly more likely to be in a better paid job initially, but this is likely to partly reflect their greater concentration in the London area (particularly black graduates). No significant differences emerged between sector of employment or occupational category of their first job (contrary to earlier research findings).
- Some two and a half years later, rather more ethnic minority graduates than whites were in a 'professional' job, but the initial earnings differential had disappeared. Average salaries for ethnic minorities was slightly lower than for whites, and particularly low for black graduates. There was even less difference between ethnic minorities and whites in employment sectors of current jobs than in initial jobs.
- More ethnic minorities than whites had entered their current job via a graduate entry programme and more said that a degree was an entry requirement or was helpful in getting the job. On the other hand, there was little difference in the extent to which the two groups felt their jobs required graduate level ability and a lower proportion of white graduates considered themselves to be slightly underemployed in their current job. Disappointment with the quality of jobs and employment opportunities was widespread (for both groups), which is in line with other recent research showing dissatisfaction of graduates on entering the labour market.
- There were little significant differences between graduates' experiences of being considered and applying for promotion, but ethnic minorities were less likely to have been promoted. Considerable variation emerged between ethnic groups relating to their prospects for promotion, being highest among Indians and lowest among black respondents.
- The number of ethnic minorities reporting serious racial discrimination in employment was small, but 42 per cent of ethnic minorities had experienced some in their present job. Black graduates were twice as likely than Asians to report racial discrimination. Interestingly, age discrimination was also mentioned more frequently by ethnic minorities than whites.
- The most common career profile was to be in permanent employment continuously since December 1993 (accounting for 33 and 42 per cent of ethnic minority and white graduates respectively). However, when class of degree was controlled for this difference virtually disappeared.
- Women ethnic minority graduates were less likely to have been in continuos employment over the period compared to

all men and white women. This lends support to the view that some ethnic minority women may be experiencing a 'double disadvantage', because of their gender and ethnicity.

- Overall, white graduates in the survey reported a generally higher level of satisfaction with their careers to date than ethnic minority graduates. However, this varied between groups, with Indians being the most satisfied, then whites, and black respondents being least satisfied.

7.4.3 Attitudes of graduates to their career development

The interview data provided more insights into the range of experiences of ethnic minorities after graduation. They confirmed the previous research that discrimination in employment is a problem that some experience. While blatant forms of discrimination are now relatively rare, more subtle forms of exclusion and indirect discrimination remain, and are felt by graduates to limit their employment opportunities.

The exploration of these difficulties, and also the more positive experiences highlighted by some respondents, gave an indication of the kinds of actions employers could take to reduce disadvantage. These included:

- using equal opportunities policies better, as a means to an end, not the end in itself
- looking more positively on the attributes of ethnic minorities rather than putting emphasis on the more negative views of employment or skill deficiencies
- reviewing selection and recruitment methods to avoid various kinds of indirect discrimination
- reviewing organisational cultures to see how they may be contributing to the persistence of racial discrimination, and
- accepting and valuing more the increasing cultural and ethnic diversity in the student population and the workplace.

7.5 Employers' views and practices

The employer interviews examined graduate recruitment and development in a sample of ten graduate recruiters, as well as their equal opportunity practices and policies. All the interviewees did not perceive any differences between their white and ethnic minority graduates in their selection, performance and progression, but these were based on subjective assessments and not backed by any research. There was little formal monitoring and an absence of any evidence of disadvantage for ethnic minority graduates.

However, various areas were highlighted which are likely to place ethnic minority graduates at a disadvantage:

- Ethnic minority representation in the organisations ranged between three and 15 per cent. The majority were in low grade occupations, and few occupied senior management positions.
- Ethnic minority graduates are more likely than whites to take up jobs seen as 'non-graduate' jobs. By doing so, they are less likely to receive structured training and development. This may also be a contributory factor to them feeling under-employed, as highlighted in the survey.
- Graduate recruitment methods of these large recruiters have not changed much recently, although there is now less 'milk-round' activity and more targeting of selected universities. The latter tend to be pre-1992 universities where the proportion of ethnic minority graduates is smaller on average.
- Disadvantage in the selection process can arise from the emphasis put on pre-university qualifications, their type of university and degree class. There is increasing use of competence-based selection criteria, but no evidence as yet as to its effect on reducing discrimination.
- Early career development (for those joining graduate entry programmes) is more structured than subsequently, and therefore less likely to show any significant differences between ethnic minority graduates and whites. Subjective (*eg* selection for training at management discretion), rather than objective factors, have a considerable bearing on the progress which individuals or groups make subsequently within organisations.
- Equal opportunities policies are applied extensively during the recruitment process, but support for such policies among senior managers varies considerably, particularly between the public and private sectors.

7.6 Conclusions

The research has shown that ethnic minority graduates are making up an increasing proportion of the graduate output, but there are uncertainties about future growth patterns. If the student population continues to grow, albeit at more modest levels than in the recent past, and diversify further, their numbers are likely to expand also. The representation of ethnic minorities, and in particular different ethnic groups, varies considerably between institutions and subjects. The future rates of growth of different ethnic groups in higher education are also likely vary as they are influenced to a different extent by a range of factors.

One of the more conclusive findings of the survey has been the differences between ethnic groups that have been highlighted, both in participation levels and in their experiences in higher education, and subsequently in the labour market. The extent to which other factors (*eg* educational background, or type of institution), rather than ethnicity alone, can explain some of these differences needs to be investigated further. In particular, lower academic performance in degree study of some ethnic minority groups may be having a considerable influence on initial employment prospects, and this needs to be explored further.

The 1995 First Destinations Return (FDR) will, for the first time, provide a breakdown on the initial destinations of graduates from different ethnic groups. This data set is expected to be released by HESA in August 1996. Because of its large scale (it is virtually a census), it will enable a more detailed investigation of initial employment outcomes to be made and some of the findings highlighted here to be tested. However, the FDR is a 'snapshot' of employment positions just six months after most graduates have completed degrees. More investigation is required over a longer time period. Also, evaluations of specific schemes to help ethnic minority students and graduates, such as the Mentoring initiative at some universities, here and in other countries, could help in understanding their benefits and suggesting ways in which graduates' career planning could be improved. There also is a need for employers to be more aware of the weaknesses of shortlisting practices which focus on traditional academic achievement and can lead to indirect forms of racial discrimination, as well more internal monitoring of their graduate selection practices, and subsequent training and development programmes.

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Appendix 1: Further Tables

Table A.1.1: Population by ethnic group, 1981-90

	1988-90 Average (000s)	%	% change 1981-88%
White	51,847	–	+1
Ethnic Minority Total	2,577	100	+23
African-Caribbean	504	20	-5
African Asian	268	10	+40*
Indian	563	22	+5*
Pakistani	450	17	+58
Bangladeshi	10	4	+110
Chinese	135	5	+447
African	158	6	+98
Other/Mixed	388	15	+18
Not Stated	509	–	–

* derived from OPCS 1981 estimate

Source: Jones, 1993

Table A.1.2: Percentage of 16-19 year olds in full-time education by ethnic group, 1988-90

	All	Male	Female
White	37	36	38
Ethnic Minority Total	56	56	56
African-Caribbean	43	39	48
African Asian	66	75	56
Indian	58	55	61
Pakistani	55	64	45
Bangladeshi	46	41	*
Chinese	77	*	*
African	71	*	*
Other/Mixed	58	55	62

Source: Jones, 1993

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Appendix 2: Survey Design and Response

A small follow-up survey of graduates was conducted in order to obtain up-to-date information about employment outcomes and career progress of graduates from different ethnic minority groups.

The survey approach was to select a sample of 1993 graduates at four universities, contact them by postal questionnaire, identify the ethnic minority students in the response, and then match them with a sub-sample of white respondents by gender, age, type of university and degree subject. This matched sample was then analysed.

This approach was chosen for two main reasons:

1. The survey was to be explorative and based on a small sample of graduates. The size of the sample and the number of universities which could be covered was limited mainly by the size of the budget and the short timescale of the project.
2. It would have been impossible to generate an 'ethnically tagged' sample of graduates. Thus a two-stage approach had to be taken, first selecting a much larger random sample of graduates and then focusing on the ethnic minority respondents.

University selection

The four institutions were selected to illustrate the range of universities that make up the higher education sector, taking into consideration a number of variables. We used the following selection criteria:

- type of university: two 'old' (*ie* established before 1992) and two 'new' (*ie* established since 1992) institutions were to be included in the sample
- geographical location: including at least one university in London and at least one in the provinces
- size of ethnic minority population: in order to maximise the number of ethnic minority graduates in the sample, the focus should be on universities with high proportions of ethnic minorities

- **ethnic minority composition: the achieved sample was to include a good representation of the main ethnic groups *ie* both Asian and black graduates**
- quality: we aimed to select at least one institution from the more prestigious universities (as perceived by employers), with higher than average 'A' level entry requirements, and at least one from those with less traditional types of student entry in terms of educational background
- subject mix: we were aiming to obtain a good representation of different subject areas in the achieved sample.

Some of these criteria were closely related, some were not. In the event, it proved impossible to meet all of them, so a compromise had to be reached. After discussions with the research sponsors at the DfEE, the following four were contacted and agreed to participate.

University A

This is a large, traditional university established in the 19th century, which is among the top ten UK universities. It has a competitive entry, a national catchment area, a high academic teaching and research reputation, covering a broad range of disciplines, including a medical school. The university is based in an urban area with an established black ethnic minority population.

According to the information provided by the university, in 1993 they had an output of 8,000 first degree students. The estimated ethnic graduate population at the time was ten per cent, including six per cent Asian, three per cent black and one per cent mixed/other students.

University B

A university established in the 1960s with a focus on science and engineering. It draws students nationwide, but the focus is on students from within their region. The university is based in a geographical area with a large Asian community.

Information provided by the university shows that their first degree output in 1993 was 5,000, while the proportion of ethnic minority students was estimated to be 12 per cent, including ten per cent Asians, one per cent Africans and Caribbeans, and one per cent mixed/other.

University C

A former polytechnic based in London, established as a university in 1992. This is a vocationally oriented and fast growing institution, with a strong access and community needs mission, which has been active in attracting ethnic minority and mature students.

The information provided by the university shows that in 1993 6,000 first degree students completed their course, and the estimated proportion of ethnic minorities was 40 per cent, including six per cent Asian, 23 per cent black and one per cent mixed/other students.

University D

A former polytechnic established as a university in 1992 with a vocational emphasis to its provision. The local catchment area is very important, and has been active in targeting local schools and ethnic minority students in the locality. It is based in an area with a relatively high ethnic minority population, particularly with a large Asian community.

The information provided by the university shows that in 1993 the first degree output was 6,000, with an estimated ethnic minority student population of 20 per cent, including 15 per cent Asians, five per cent Africans and Caribbeans, and 0.4 per cent mixed/other.

Graduate sample selection

At each university, discussions were held with staff in the registry office, the alumni records office and careers unit. Agreement was reached with the universities that each would select the sample from their records of first degree full-time UK domiciled students who completed their course in 1993. These names were then matched to address files, using alumni records. Some universities found this process easier to do than others, and there were also differences between universities in the quality of addresses held on students. This caused some delay. Timing was another factor, as the sample selection coincided with the start of the academic year and most staff were very busy and had other priorities.

In order to generate sufficient numbers of ethnic minority graduates in the response, each university was asked to provide a large sample of graduates (see Table A.2.1 for details) and a total of 3,421 graduates were included in the initial sample. The response rate for each institution is also shown in Table A.2.1.

Response rate

The universities sent out the questionnaires on our behalf for reasons of confidentiality relating to students' addresses.

After one reminder (also sent by the universities), a total of 1,177 questionnaires had been received by the end of January 1996,

Table A.2.1: Initial and achieved samples, total response and ethnic minority response in each sample university

Institution	Initial sample N	PO returns and unusable Qs N	Total achieved sample N	Total response %	Total ethnic minorities N	Ethnic minority response %	Total respondents in matched sample N
Univ. A	1,000	42	301	31	8	3	16
Univ. B	1,021	50	470	48	45	10	90
Univ. C	700	52	170	26	53	31	106
Univ. D	700	80	236	38	30	13	60
Total	*3,421*	*224*	*1,177*	*37*	*136*	*12*	*272*

Source: IES Survey

including 224 questionnaires returned by the Post Office. We therefore achieved a response rate of 37 per cent. As mentioned in Chapter 1, this was disappointing and below the response we had hoped to achieve. Previous similar follow-up studies at IES have achieved a minimum of 50 per cent response.

The response rate has been negatively affected by a combination of factors. First, the variable quality of addresses held at the different institutions, as shown by the differences in the response from different universities (see Table A.2.1). Second, because of time constraints we were unable to send a second reminder as planned. Third, the survey remained in the field for a relatively short period of time, a few weeks more would have considerably increased the response rate, (298 additional questionnaires were returned after the survey was closed).

Representativeness

In the following tables, we present the whole sample composition for each university in terms of age, gender and subject as well as 1990 entry data from all UK universities and former polytechnics. Unfortunately, the universities were unable to supply this information on an individual basis.

Table A.2.2: Age composition of respondents from the different institutions

Age applied at university	University A		University B		University C		University D	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Under 21	255	88	380	81	72	42	164	69
21 and over	34	12	88	19	98	58	72	30
Total	*289*		*468*		*170*		*236*	

Missing cases: 14

Source: IES Survey

Table A.2.3: Age composition, UCCA and PCAS 1990 entry data

Age applied at university	Universities	Former polytechnics
Under 21	87%	80%
21 and over	13%	20%
Total n. of home accepted applicants	*99,377*	*64,482*

Source: UCCA, 1991; PCAS 1991

As shown in Tables A.2.2 and A.2.3, compared with national data our sample included a higher proportion of mature students. However, entry data from former polytechnics excludes information on direct entrants, many of whom are likely to be mature students.

Women also seemed to be over-represented in our sample, compared with national data (Tables A.2.4 and A.2.5). This could be partly explained by the inclusion in the sample of institutions with a higher proportion of students from subjects were women tend to be better represented (*eg* subjects allied to medicine, and arts/humanities).

As can be seen from Table A.2.6, business/finance/administration graduates were better represented in the two former polytechnics. This is line with national data. The proportion of social sciences graduates varied considerably between different institutions, but the overall proportion was similar to the 1993 national graduate output. Compared with national data, students from arts/humanities, subjects allied to medicine, engineering/technology were over-represented, while graduates from maths/computing, multi-disciplinary courses, and natural/physical sciences were under-represented.

Table A.2.4: Gender composition of respondents from the different institutions

Gender	University A		University B		University C		University D	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Female	127	44	236	51	113	67	128	55
Male	162	56	228	49	55	33	106	45
Total	*289*		*464*		*168*		*243*	

Missing cases: 22

Source: IES Survey

Table A.2.5: Gender composition, UCCA and PCAS 1990 entry data

Gender	Universities	Former polytechnics
Female	48%	44%
Male	53%	56%
Total n. of home accepted applicants	*99,377*	*64,482*

Source: UCCA, 1991; PCAS 1991

Table A.2.6: Degree subject by proportion of respondents from different institutions and for the whole sample

Degree subject	University A %	University B %	University C %	University D %	Proportion of the total sample %
Business/finance/admin.	0.3	13	12	18	10
Social sciences	15	14	24	7	14
Arts and humanities	7	10	24	16	12
Engineering and technology	14	19	10	10	15
Maths and computing	7	6	–	0.4	4
Subjects allied to medicine	4	13	2	7	8
Professional courses	5	–	8	20	7
Multi-disciplinary	9	8	16	2	8
Natural/physical sciences	22	6	4	4	9
Others*	17	13	–	17	13
Total number	*301*	*457*	*161*	*234*	

Missing cases: 24

* *These include: medicine, dentistry, veterinary science, agriculture and languages.*

Source: IES Survey

TableA.2.7: Degree subject, UCCA and PCAS 1990 entry data

Degree subject	Universities %	Former polytechnics %
Business/finance/admin.	5	18
Social sciences	15	15
Arts and humanities	9	10
Engineering and technology	12	10
Maths and computing	7	6
Subjects allied to medicine	3	3
Professional courses	4	6
Multi-disciplinary	11	14
Natural/physical sciences	16	10
Others*	27	7
Total of accepted home applicants	*99,377*	*64,482*

* *These include: medicine, dentistry, veterinary science, agriculture and languages.*

Source: UCCA, 1991; PCAS 1991

Matched sample

The achieved sample comprised 11 per cent from ethnic minorities (136 respondents). These were matched with a sub-sample of white respondents by type of institution, degree subject, age and gender. A fifth variable, class of degree, is also important in explaining differences in employment outcomes. However, the sample was not sufficiently large to enable a fifth variable to be controlled for at the sample selection stage, and degree class was subsequently controlled for in the analysis.

The proportion of ethnic minorities in the sample was lower than expected, based on the initial sample design estimates previously given by the selected universities, which ranged from ten to 40 per cent. It was particularly low at University A. This was due to the difficulty we encountered in selecting a sample of universities which would adequately meet all the criteria, listed above, and our initial over-estimation of the likely ethnic representation at most pre-1992 universities. It proved difficult to find many pre-1992 universities with a representation of ethnic minorities in the undergraduate population in excess of ten per cent, many had considerably fewer (especially if overseas students are excluded). Also, the proportion of ethnic minorities has been rising and, so while some may have current ethnic minority populations at ten per cent or more, the average entry figure in the late 1980s (when the 1993 graduates were admitted) was under eight per cent (see UCCA statistics in Chapter 2) and for many individual universities it was below five per cent at that time. The problem of estimating levels of representation was complicated by the absence of data on ethnicity of students at most universities prior to 1994, and so reliance had to be put on estimates, which proved very inaccurate in places. The main source of inaccuracy is thought to lie in the inclusion by universities of international students in their estimates, especially of postgraduates.

Table A.2.8: Respondents from the matched sample by degree subject

Degree subject	N	%
Business/finance	51	19
Social sciences	45	17
Arts and humanities	39	14
Engineering and technology	33	12
Maths and computing	24	9
Subjects allied to medicine	23	9
Professional courses	23	9
Multi-disciplinary	20	8
Natural/physical sciences	14	5
Total	*272*	

Source: IES Survey

Appendix 3: The Questionnaire

GRADUATES AND THE LABOUR MARKET

Confidential to the Institute for Employment Studies

Please answer the following questions as fully as you are able by ticking the boxes or writing in the spaces provided. Please return the completed questionnaire to IES in the reply-paid envelope provided. If you have any queries, please contact Ivana La Valle or Nii Djan Tackey at IES: telephone 01273 686751. Thank you for your co-operation.

1. Your Degree Course

1. What was the full name of the degree from which you graduated (eg BA (Hons) Sociology)? *(Please write in)*

   ....

2. What was the class of your degree? *(Please tick one box only)*

   First ☐ 1 Upper Second ☐ 2 Lower Second ☐ 3 Third ☐ 4 Other ☐ 5
   (Please specify) ....

3. How important were the factors below in determining your choice of university/polytechnic? *(Please circle number as appropriate)*

	Very important	Important	Not very important	Not important at all	Don't know/ not applicable
Cost of living in the area	1	2	3	4	5
Geographical location	1	2	3	4	5
Facilities	1	2	3	4	5
Positive attitudes towards mature students	1	2	3	4	5
Positive attitudes towards students from ethnic minorities	1	2	3	4	5
Recommendations of others	1	2	3	4	5
Offered subject or combination of subjects I wanted to study	1	2	3	4	5
Reputation	1	2	3	4	5
Other (*Please specify*)	1	2	3	4	5

....

4. Was the university/polytechnic where you did your degree your first choice? *(Please tick one box)*

   Yes ☐ 1 No ☐ 2 It was the only one I applied to ☐ 3

2. Your Education and Work Experience Before Your Degree Course

5. What was the highest level of qualification you gained before entering university/polytechnic? *(Please tick one box)*

   'A' level ☐ 1
   Scottish Highers ☐ 2 *Go to Q7*
   BTEC, HNC, OND ☐ 3 *Go to Q7*
   Other *(Please specify* ☐ 4 *Go to Q7*
   eg Professional qualification, Access course) ....

6. What 'A' level grades did you obtain? ☐ (36-37) ☐ (38-39) ☐ (40-41) ☐ (42-43) ☐ (44-45)

7. Did you have any of the following periods of work experience before doing your degree? *(Please tick as appropriate)*

	Yes	No
Voluntary unpaid work	☐	☐
Paid work for less than a year in total	☐	☐
Paid work for more than a year in total	☐	☐

Other type of work experience *(Please specify)* ....

3. Experiences Since Graduation

In this section we are interested in what has happened to you since you graduated.

To answer the questions below you will need the following definitions:

Permanent employment: a job (full or part-time) that both you and your employer intend to last more than 3 months, including voluntary work and internships.

Short-term employment: a job that lasts less than 3 months (both full and part-time).

Further study: full or part-time further study or continuing education leading to a qualification (eg MA, PhD, Professional Qualification).

Not available for employment: neither in employment nor further study and not looking for either.

Unemployed: not in work but seeking employment.

8. For each specified month please circle your main status for that month only *ie* the category that best describes your activities for the greatest period of that month *(Please circle one number only for each period of time)*

What were you doing in:	Permanent employment	Short-term employment	Further study	Not available for employment	Unemployed
December 1993 (6 months after graduation)	1	2	3	4	5
June 1994 (12 months after graduation)	1	2	3	4	5
December 1994 (1½ years after graduation)	1	2	3	4	5
June 1995 (2 years after graduation)	1	2	3	4	5
Now	1	2	3	4	5

3a. Further Study

If you have undertaken any further study (see definition above) since completing your degree course or you are currently studying, please answer questions 9 and 10, but if you have not undertaken any further study go directly to section 3b.

9. Can you please indicate in the boxes/spaces below the type of course(s) you have undertaken, whether it was/they were full or part-time and when you started and finished (or are planning to finish) it/them. Can you please start with the first course you did after graduating.

Qualification title and subject	Mode of attendance Full-time = FT Part-time = PT		Course duration from - to (month and year)
....	FT ☐	PT ☐	From ....To ....
....	FT ☐	PT ☐	From ....To ....
....	FT ☐	PT ☐	From ....To ....

10. How important were the following considerations in deciding to undertake further study? *(Please circle number as appropriate)* If you have undertaken more than one course, please answer with reference to the first course you did after graduating.

	Very important	Important	Not very important	Not important at all	Don't know/ not applicable
To gain formal entry requirement for a specific career/profession	1	2	3	4	5
To enhance my career prospects in a particular field or job	1	2	3	4	5
To enhance my career prospects in general	1	2	3	4	5
To follow a personal interest	1	2	3	4	5
Lack of employment opportunities after graduating	1	2	3	4	5
Other *(Please specify)*	1	2	3	4	5

....

3b. Unemployment

If there have been times (including now) since you graduated when you were unemployed (see definition on previous page), please answer questions in this section, but if you have never been unemployed since graduating go directly to section 3c.

11. Since graduation how many times, in total, have you been unemployed? *(Please write in)*

12. Could you indicate below when was your longest period of unemployment *ie* when it started and when it finished. *(Please write in)*

From (month) .... 19...... (year) to (month) .... 19...... (year)

13. What factors do you feel have hindered you in your search for a suitable job? *(Please write in)*

....

....

....

....

If you are currently unemployed please answer Q14, if you are not unemployed at the moment go directly to section 3c.

14. How many jobs have you applied for in the last six months? *(Please write in 0 if you have not made any job applications)*

3c. Employment Experiences

Please answer questions in sections 3c and 4 with reference to any type of job you have had since graduating *ie* voluntary or paid, permanent or short-term, part or full-time. If you have never been in employment since graduating go directly to Q41 in section 6.

15. How many jobs have you had since graduation? *(Please write in)*

16. How many employers have you worked for since graduation? *(Please write in)*

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4. Your First Job

17. How many months after graduation did you obtain your first job? *(Please write in)* ☐

18. How many jobs did you apply for before securing your first job? *(Please write in)* ☐

19. How many job offers did you get before you obtained your first job — including the offer of your first job? *(Please write in)* ☐

20. Is this your current job? *(Please tick one box)*

Yes ☐ 1 No ☐ 2 Not currently in employment ☐ 3

21. For how many months were you (or have you been) in your first job? *(Please write in)* ☐

22. Below are some questions about your first job *(Please tick as appropriate)*

Were (are) you:

	Yes	No
full-time (*ie* 16 hours or more a week)?	☐	☐
part-time (*ie* less than 16 hours a week)?	☐	☐
on a contract for a fixed period?	☐	☐
self-employed?	☐	☐
on an internship, work or training placement?	☐	☐
working on a voluntary basis (*ie* unpaid)?	☐	☐

23. What was (is) your full job title? *(Please write in)* ....

Approximately what was your **starting annual salary**, before tax? *(Please write in, if unpaid please state so)*

£ .... per year

24. In which county/city (or country if not in the UK) was your job based? *(Please write in)*

....

25. Did (do) you work in: *(Please tick one box)*

A private sector company in:

manufacturing/engineering ☐ 01
construction ☐ 02
retailing ☐ 03
finance ☐ 04
legal services ☐ 05
media/publishing ☐ 06
other *(Please specify)* ☐ 07

....

central government ☐ 08
local government ☐ 09
the national health service ☐ 10
a school ☐ 11
a university or college ☐ 12
a voluntary organisation ☐ 13
other *(Please specify)* ☐ 14

....

26. If you were (are) employed by a private sector company or a voluntary organisation, approximately how many people were (are) employed in your company as a whole in the UK? *(Please tick one box)*

Under 100 employees ☐ 1
100-499 employees ☐ 2
500-1999 employees ☐ 3
2000 or more employees ☐ 4

5. Your Current Job

27. Below are some questions about your current employment status. *If you are still in your first job go directly to Q32. If you are not in employment at the moment go directly to Q41 in section 6.*

Are you: *(Please tick as appropriate)*

	Yes	No
full-time (*ie* 16 hours or more a week)?	☐	☐
part-time (*ie* less than 16 hours a week)?	☐	☐
on a contract for a fixed period?	☐	☐
self-employed?	☐	☐
working on a voluntary basis (*ie* unpaid)?	☐	☐

28. What is your full job title? *(Please write in)*

....

29. Do you work in: *(Please tick one box)*

A private sector company in:

manufacturing/engineering ☐ 01
construction ☐ 02
retailing ☐ 03
finance ☐ 04
legal services ☐ 05
media/publishing ☐ 06
other *(Please specify)* ☐ 07

....

central government ☐ 08
local government ☐ 09
the national health service ☐ 10
a school ☐ 11
a university or college ☐ 12
a voluntary organisation ☐ 13
other *(Please specify)* ☐ 14

....

30. If you are employed by a private sector company or a voluntary organisation, approximately how many people were (are) employed in your company as a whole in the UK? *(Please tick one box)*

Under 100 employees ☐ 1
100-499 employees ☐ 2
500-1999 employees ☐ 3
2000 or more employees ☐ 4

31. In which county/city (or country if not in the UK) is your job based? *(Please write in)*

....

32. Approximately what is your current annual salary before tax? *(Please write in, if unpaid please state so)*

£ .... per year

33. **Would you describe your job as 'graduate level employment' in the sense that:** *(Please tick as appropriate)*

	Yes	No	Don't know/ not applicable
A degree was a formal entry requirement	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
A degree was helpful in getting the job	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
The work requires graduate ability	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
The previous holder was a graduate	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
Entry was via a graduate trainee programme	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3

34. Do you consider yourself underemployed (not being used to your full capacity and potential) in your job? *(Please tick one box)*

Very ☐ 1 Slightly ☐ 2 Not at all ☐ 3
Go to Q36

35. In what ways do you feel underemployed?

....

....

....

....

36. How important were the factors below in deciding to apply and then accepting your current job? *(Please circle number as appropriate)*

	Very important	Important	Not very important	Not important at all	Don't know/ not applicable
It suited my skills and interests	1	2	3	4	5
Salary level	1	2	3	4	5
Company's reputation	1	2	3	4	5
Company's equal opportunity policy and practice	1	2	3	4	5
Training opportunities	1	2	3	4	5
Opportunities for career development	1	2	3	4	5
Geographical location	1	2	3	4	5
Other *(Please specify)*	1	2	3	4	5

....

....

37. To what extent, if any, have you encountered the following difficulties in your current job? (*Please circle number as appropriate*)

	Not at all	Not very much	A little	A fair amount	A great deal
Tight control (lack of autonomy)	1	2	3	4	5
Lack of challenging work	1	2	3	4	5
Lack of proper or unsatisfactory training	1	2	3	4	5
Age discrimination	1	2	3	4	5
Racial discrimination	1	2	3	4	5
Sex discrimination	1	2	3	4	5
Other (*Please specify*)	1	2	3	4	5

....

38. How would you rate your promotion prospects in the next two years on a five point scale going from 0 for 'very poor' to 5 for 'very good'? (*Please circle one number only*)

Very poor 0 1 2 3 4 5 Very good

39. Since being in your current job have you: (*Please tick as appropriate*)

	Yes	No
applied for promotion	☐	☐
been considered for promotion	☐	☐
been promoted	☐	☐

40. Overall how satisfied are you with your career to date? (*Please tick one box*)

Very satisfied ☐ 1 Satisfied ☐ 2 Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied ☐ 3

Dissatisfied ☐ 4 Very dissatisfied ☐ 5

6. Personal Details

41. Are you: (*Please tick one box*) Female ☐ Male ☐

42. What was your age on your last birthday? (*Please write in*) .... (years)

43. Do you have any dependent children living with you? (*Please tick one box*) Yes ☐ No ☐

44. Which of the categories below best describes your ethnic origin? (*Please tick one box*)

Black African ☐ 01 Black Caribbean ☐ 02 Black Other ☐ 03

Indian ☐ 04 Pakistani ☐ 05 Bangladeshi ☐ 06

Chinese ☐ 07 Other Asian ☐ 08 Mixed ethnic origin ☐ 09

White ☐ 10 Other ☐ 11

(*Please specify*) ....

45. Can you please indicate below where was your place of residence i) before going to university/ polytechnic and ii) where is your current residence? *(Please tick as appropriate)*

Your residence	i) Before university/polytechnic		ii) Currently
Greater London	☐ 01		☐ 01
South East England (including East Anglia)	☐ 02		☐ 02
South West England	☐ 03		☐ 03
Midlands	☐ 04		☐ 04
North England	☐ 05		☐ 05
Wales	☐ 06		☐ 06
Scotland	☐ 07		☐ 07
N. Ireland	☐ 08		☐ 08
No main residence	☐ 09		☐ 09
Other *(Please specify)*	☐ 10	....	☐ 10

Thank you for completing the questionnaire. We would like to interview a small sample of graduates who have taken part in this survey, to explore in more depth the main influences on their career so far. If you would like to take part in the follow-up interview, could you please write your name, address and telephone number(s) in the space below.

Name: ....

Address: ....

Telephone number: .... (home) .... (work)

Thank you for spending time and effort to complete the questionnaire. If you wish please add any comments in the space below .

Thank you for your assistance. Please return the questionnaire in the reply paid envelope direct to:
Institute for Employment Studies, Mantell Building, University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton, BN1 9RF
Fax: 01273 690 430 **Tel: 01273 686 751**

ETHNIC MINORITY GRADUATES: DIFFERENCES BY DEGREES

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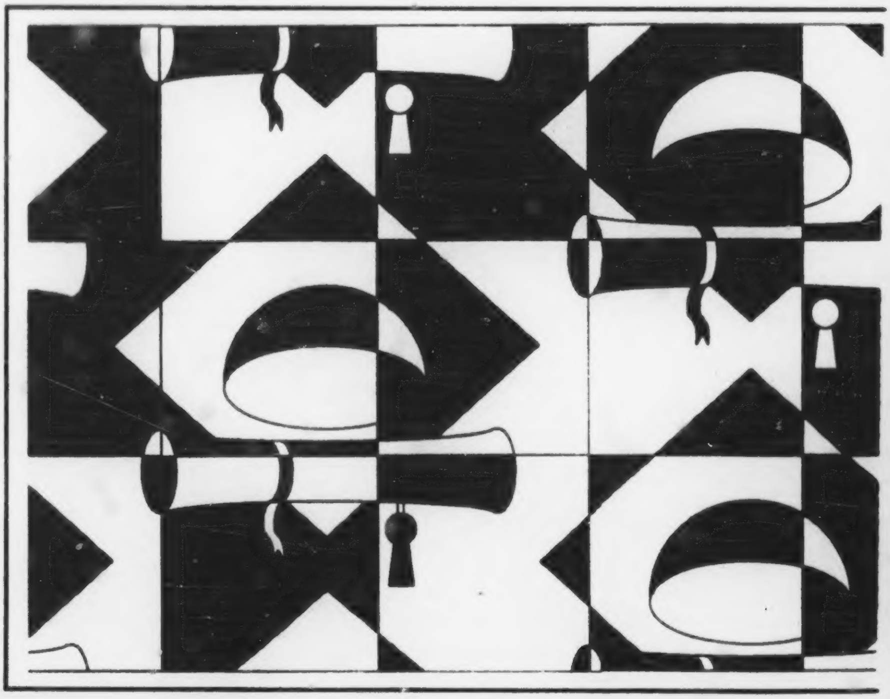
Participation in higher education by students from ethnic minorities has been increasing steadily over the past decade, and they now represent almost one in eight of all UK students. Very little is known about their employment outcomes. In particular, does the increased participation of ethnic minorities in higher education translate into an improved position for them in the labour market? To answer some of these questions, the Department for Education and Employment commissioned this exploratory study to compare the employment experiences of graduates from different ethnic groups.



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